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CHAPTERS

ON

CHURCHYARDS.

CHAPTER I.

MANY are the idle tourists who have babbled of country churchyards—many are the able pens which have been employed on the same subjects. *One* in particular, in the delightful olio of the "Sketch-book," has traced a picture so true to nature, so beautifully simple and pathetic, that succeeding essayists might well despair of success in attempting similiar descriptions, were not the theme, in fact, inexhaustible, a source of endless variety, a volume of instructive records, whereof those marked with least incident are yet replete

with interest for that human being who stands alone amongst the quiet graves, musing on the mystery of his own existence, and on the past and present state of those poor relics of mortality which everywhere surround him, mouldering beneath his feet—mingling with the common soil—feeding the rank churchyard vegetation—once sentient like himself with vigorous life, subject to all the tumultuous passions that agitate his own heart, pregnant with a thousand busy schemes, elevated and depressed by alternate hopes and fears—liable, in a word, to all the pains, the pleasures, and " the ills, that flesh is heir to."

The leisurely traveller arriving at a country inn, with the intention of tarrying a day, an hour, or a yet shorter period, in the town or village, generally finds time to saunter towards the church, and even to loiter about its surrounding graves, as if his nature (solitary in the midst of the living crowd) claimed affinity, and sought communion, with the populous dust beneath his feet.

Such, at least, are the feelings with which I have often lingered in the churchyard of a strange place, and about the church itself—to which, indeed, in

all places, and in all countries, the heart of the Christian pilgrim feels itself attracted as towards his very home, for there at least, though alone amongst a strange people, he is no stranger: It is his Father's house.

I am not sure that I heartily approve the custom—rare in this country, but frequent in many others—of planting flowers and flowering shrubs about the graves. I am *quite* sure that I hate all the sentimental mummery with which the far-famed burying-place of Pere La Chaise is garnished out. It is faithfully in keeping with Parisian taste, and perfectly in unison with French feeling; but I should wonder at the profound sympathy with which numbers of my own countrymen expatiate on that pleasure-ground of Death, if it were still possible to feel surprise at any instance of degenerate taste and perverted feeling in our travelled islanders—if it were not, too, the vulgarest thing in the world to wonder at anything.

The custom, so general in Switzerland, and so common in our own principality of Wales, of strewing flowers over the graves of departed friends, either on the anniversaries of their deaths,

or on other memorable days, is touching and beautiful. Those frail blossoms scattered over the green sod, in their morning freshness, but for a little space retain their balmy odours, and their glowing tints, till the sun goes down, and the breeze of evening sighs over them, and the dews of night fall on their pale beauty, and the withered and fading wreath becomes a yet more appropriate tribute to the silent dust beneath. But rose-trees in full bloom, and tall staring lilies, and flaunting lilacs, and pert priggish spirafrutexes, are, methinks, ill in harmony with that holiness of perfect repose which should pervade the last resting-place of mortality. Even in our own unsentimental England, I have seen two or three of these flower-plot graves. One, in particular, I remember, had been planned and planted by a young disconsolate widow, to the memory of her deceased partner. The tomb itself was a common square erection of freestone, covered over with a slab of black marble, on which, under the name, age, &c. of the defunct, was engraven an elaborate epitaph, commemorating his many virtues, and pathetically intimating, that, at no distant period, the vacant

space remaining on the same marble would receive the name of "his inconsolable Eugenia." The tomb was hedged about by a basket-work of honeysuckles. A Persian lilac drooped over its foot, and, at the head, (substituted for the elegant cypress, coy denizen of our ungenial clime,) a young poplar perked up its pyramidical form. Divers other shrubs and flowering plants completed the ring-fence, plentifully interspersed with "the fragrant weed, the Frenchman's darling," whose perfume, when I visited the spot, was wafted over the whole churchyard. It was then the full flush of summer. The garden had been planted but a month; but the lady had tended, and propped, and watered those gay strangers with her own delicate hands, evermore in the dusk of evening returning to her tender task, so that they had taken their removal kindly, and grew and flourished as carelessly round that cold marble, and in that field of graves, as they had done heretofore in their own sheltered nursery.

A year afterwards—a year almost to a day—I stood once more on that same spot, in the same month—"the leafy month of June." But—it was

leafless there. The young poplar still stood sentinel in its former station, but dry, withered, and sticky, like an old broom at the mast-head of a vessel on sale. The parson's cow, and his half-score fatting wethers, had violated the sacred enclosure, and trodden down its flowery basket-work into the very soil. The plants and shrubs were nibbled down to miserable stumps, and from the sole survivor, the poor straggling lilac, a fat old waddling ewe had just cropped the last sickly flower-branch, and stood staring at me with a pathetic vacancy of countenance, the half-munched consecrated blossom dangling from her sacrilegious jaws. "And is it even so?" I half-articulated, with a sudden thrill of irrepressible emotion. "Poor widowed mourner! lovely Eugenia! Art thou already re-united to the object of thy faithful affection? And so lately! Not yet on that awaiting space on the cold marble have they inscribed thy gentle name. And those fragile memorials! were there none to tend them for thy sake?" Such was my sentimental apostrophe; and the unwonted impulse so far incited me, that I actually pelted away the sheep from that last

resting-place of faithful love, and reared against its side the trailing branches of the neglected lilac. Well satisfied with myself for the performance of this pious act, I turned from the spot in a mood of calm, pleasing melancholy, that, by degrees, (while I yet lingered about the churchyard,) resolved itself into a train of poetic reverie, and I was already far advanced in a sort of elegiac tribute to the memory of that fair being, whose tender nature had sunk under the stroke "that reft her mutual heart," when the horrid interruption of a loud shrill whistle startled me from my poetic vision, cruelly disarranging the beautiful combination of high-wrought, tender, pathetic feelings, which were flowing naturally into verse, as from the very fount of Helicon. Lifting my eyes towards the vulgar cause of this vulgar disturbance, the cow-boy (for it was he, "who whistled as he went, for want of thought") nodded to me his rustic apology for a bow, and passed on towards the very tomb I had just quitted, near which his milky charge, the old brindled cow, still munched on, avaricious of the last mouthful. If the clown's obstreperous mirth had before broken in on my mood of inspiration, its last deli-

cate glow was utterly dispelled by the uncouth vociferation, and rude expletives, with which he proceeded to dislodge the persevering animal from her rich pasture-ground. Insensible alike to his remonstrances, his threats, or his tender persuasion —to his "Whoy! whoy! old girl! Whoy, Blossom! whoy, my lady!—I say, come up, do; come up ye plaguey baste!" Blossom continued to munch and ruminate with the most imperturbable calmness—backing and sideling away, however, as her pursuer made nearer advances, and ever and anon looking up at him with most provoking assurance, as if to calculate how many tufts she might venture to pull before he got fairly within reach of her. And so, retrograding and manœuvring, she at last intrenched herself behind the identical tombstone beside which I had stood so lately in solemn contemplation. Here—the cow-boy's patience being completely exhausted—with the intention of switching old Blossom from her last stronghold, he caught up, and began tearing from the earth, that one long straggling stem of lilac which I had endeavoured to replace in somewhat of its former position. "Hold! hold!" I cried, springing forward

with the vehement gesture of impassioned feeling —"Have you no respect for the ashes of the dead? Dare you thus violate with sacrilegious hands the last sad sanctuary of faithful love?" The boy stood like one petrified, stared at me for a moment, with a look of indescribable perplexity, then screwing one corner of his mouth almost into contact with the corresponding corner of one crinkled-up eye—at the same time shoving up his old ragged hat, and scratching his curly pate; and having, as I suppose, by the help of that operation, construed my vehement address into the language of inquiry, he set himself very methodically about satisfying my curiosity on every point wherever he conceived it possible I might have interrogated him —taking his cue, with some ingenuity, from the one word of my oration, which was familiar to his ear ——"Dead! Ees, Squoire been dead twelve months last Whitsuntide; and thick be his'n moniment, an' madam was married last week to our measter, an' thick be our cow—"

Oh, Reader!

Is it to be wondered at, that, since that adventure, I have ever been disposed to look with an *un-*

glistening, and even cynical eye, on those same flower-plot graves? Nay, that, at sight of them, I feel an extraordinary degree of hard-heartedness stealing over me? I cannot quit the subject without offering a word or two of well-meant advice to all disconsolate survivors—widows more especially—as to the expediency or non-expediency of indulging this flowery grief. Possibly, were I to obey the dictates of my own tastes and feelings, I should say, "Be content with a simple record—perhaps a scriptural sentence, on a plain headstone. Suffer not the inscription to become defaced and illegible, nor rank weeds to wave over it; and smooth be the turf of the green hillock! But if—to use a French phrase—*Il faut afficher ses regrets*—if there *must* be *effect*, sentimentalities, prettinesses, urns, flowers—not only a few scattered blossoms, but a regular planted border, like the garnish of a plateau;—then, let me beseech you, fair inconsolables! be cautious in your proceedings.—Temper with discreet foresight (if that be possible) the first agonizing burst of sensibility—Take the counsels of sage experience—Temporize with the as yet unascertained nature of your own feelings—Proclaim

not those vegetable vows of eternal fidelity—Refrain, at least, from the trowel and the spade—Dig not—plant not—For one year only—for the *first* year, at least—For one year only, I beseech you—sow annuals.

CHAPTER II.

In parts of Warwickshire, and some of the adjacent counties, more especially in the churchyards of the larger towns, the frightful fashion of black tombstones is almost universal. Black tombstones, tall and slim, and lettered in gold, looking, for all the world, like bolt upright coffin lids. I marvel the worthy natives do not go a step farther in their tasteful system, and coat their churches over with the same lugubrious hue, exempting only the brass weathercocks, and the gilded figures on the clock faces. The whole scene would unquestionably be far more in keeping, and even sublime in stupendous ugliness. Some village burying grounds have, however, escaped this barbarous adornment; and in Warwickshire particularly, and within the circuit of a few miles round Warwick itself, are very many small, picturesque, hamlet churches,

each surrounded by its lowly flock of green graves, and grey headstones; the churchyards, for the most part, separated only by a sunk fence, or a slight railing, from the little sheltered grass-plot of a small neat rectory, the casements of which generally front the long east window of the church. I like this proximity of the pastor's dwelling to his Master's house; nay, of the abode of the living to the sanctuary of the dead. It seems to me to remove in part the great barrier of separation between the two worlds. The end of life, it is true, lies before us. The end of *this* life, with all its host of vanities and perturbations;—but immediately from thence, we step upon the threshold of the holy place, before the gates of which no commissioned angel stands with a flaming sword, barring our entrance to the tree of life. It would seem to me that thus abiding, as it were, under the very shadow of the sacred walls, and within sight of man's last earthly resting-place, I should feel, as in a charmed circle, more secure from the power of evil influences, than if exposed to their assaults, on the great open desert of the busy world. Therefore, I like this proximity so frequently observable

in the little hamlets I have described. In one or two instances, indeed, I perceived that attempts had been made to exclude the view of the church and churchyard from the rectory windows, by planting a few clumps of evergreens, that looked as unmeaningly stuck there, as heart could wish. Miserable taste that! "but let it pass," as the Courier said lately of one of your finest poetical articles, Mr. North.

I never saw a more perfect picture of beautiful repose, than presented itself to me in one of my evening walks last summer. One of the few evening walks it was possible to enjoy during the nominal reign of that freezing, dripping summer.

I came abruptly upon a small church, and burial ground, and rectory, all combined and embowered within a space that the eye could take in at one glance, and a pleasant glance it was!

The west window of the church was lighted up with red and glowing refulgence—not with the gorgeous hues of artificial colouring, but with the bright banners of the setting sun; and strongly defined shadows, and mouldings of golden light, marked out the rude tracery of the low ivied tower,

and the heavy stone-work of the deep narrow windows, and the projections of the low massy buttresses, irregularly applied, in defiance of all architectural proportion, as they had become necessary to the support of the ancient edifice. And here and there on the broken slanting of the buttresses, and on their projecting ledges, might be seen patches of green and yellow moss, so exquisitely bright, that methought the jewellery with which Aladdin enchased the windows of his enchanted palace, was dull and colourless, compared with the vegetable emeralds and topazes, wherewith "Nature's own sweet and cunning hand" had blazoned that old church. And the low head-stones also—some half sunk into the churchyard mould—many carved out into cherubim, with their trumpeters' cheeks and expanded wings, or with the awful emblems of death's-heads, cross-bones, and hour-glasses! The low head-stones, with their rustic scrolls, "that teach us to live and die," those also were edged and tinted with the golden gleam, and it stretched in long floods of amber light athwart the soft green turf, kissing the nameless hillocks; and, on one little grave in particular, (it

must have been that of an infant,) methought the departing glory lingered with peculiar brightness. Oh! it was a beautiful churchyard. A stream of running water intersected it almost close to the church wall. It was clear as crystal, running over grey pebbles, with a sound that chimed harmoniously in with the general character of the scene, low, soothing, monotonous, dying away into a liquid whisper, as the rivulet shrank into a shallow and still shallower channel, matted with moss and water plants, and closely overhung by the low underwood of an adjoining coppice, within whose leafy labyrinth it stole at last silently away. It was an unusual and a lovely thing to see the grave-stones, and the green hillocks, with the very wild flowers (daisies and buttercups) growing on them, reflected in the little rill as it wound among them—the reversed objects, and glancing colours, shifting, blending, and trembling, in the broken ripple. *That* and the voice of the water! It was "Life in Death." One *felt* that the sleepers below were but gathered for a while into their quiet chambers. Nay, their very sleep was not voiceless. On the edges of the graves—on the moist

margin of the stream, grew many tufts of the beautiful "Forget me not." Never, sure, was such appropriate station for that meek eloquent flower!

Such was the churchyard, from which, at about ten yards distance from the church, a slight low railing, with a latch wicket, divided off a patch of the loveliest green sward, (yet but a continuation of the churchyard turf,) backed with tall elm, and luxuriant evergreens, amongst which peeped modestly out the little neat rectory. It was constructed of the same rough grey stone with the church. Long, low, with far projecting eaves, and casement windows facing that large west window of the church, still flaming with the reflected splendour of the setting sun. His orb was sinking to rest behind the grove, half-embowering the small dwelling, which stood in the perfect quietness of its own shadow, the dark green masses of jasmine, clustering round its porch and windows, scarcely revealing (but by their exquisite odour) the pure white blossoms that starred "its lovely gloom."

But their fragrance floated on the gentle breath of evening, mingled with the perfume of mignon-

ette, and the long-fingered marvels of Peru, (the pale daughters of twilight,) and innumerable sweet flowers, blooming in their beds of rich black mould, close under the lattice windows. These were all flung wide, for the evening was still and sultry ; and one, opening down to the ground, shewed the interior of a very small parlour, plainly and modestly furnished, but panelled all round with well-filled book-cases. A lady's harp stood in one corner, and in another two fine globes, and an orrery. Some small flower-baskets, filled with roses, were dispersed about the room; and at a table near the window sat a gentleman writing, or rather leaning over a writing-desk with a pen in his hand, for his eyes were directed towards the gravel-walk before the window, where a lady—an elegant-looking woman, whose plain white robe and dark uncovered hair well became the sweet matronly expression of her face and figure—was anxiously stretching out her encouraging arms to her little daughter, who came laughing and tottering towards her on the soft green turf, her tiny feet, as they essayed their first independent steps in the eventful walk of life, twisting and turning with graceful awkwardness,

and unsteady pressure, under the disproportionate weight of her fair fat person. It was a sweet, heart-thrilling sound, the joyous, crowing laugh of that little creature, when with one last, bold, mighty effort, she reached the maternal arms, and was caught up to the maternal bosom, and half devoured with kisses, in an ecstacy of unspeakable love.

As if provoked to emulous loudness by that mirthful outcry, and impatient to mingle its clear notes with that young, innocent voice, a blackbird, embowered in a tall, neighbouring bay-tree, poured out forthwith such a flood of full, rich melody, as stilled the baby's laugh, and for a moment arrested its observant ear.—But for a *moment*.—The kindred natures burst out into full chorus;—the baby clapped her hands, and laughed aloud, and, after her fashion, mocked the unseen songstress. The bird redoubled her tuneful efforts; and still the baby laughed, and still the bird rejoined; and both together raised such a melodious din, that the echoes of the old church rang again; and never since the contest of the nightingale with her hu-

man rival, was heard such an emulous conflict of musical skill.

I could have laughed for company, from my unseen lurking-place, within the dark shadow of one of the church buttresses. It was altogether such a scene as I shall never forget—one from which I could hardly tear myself away. Nay, I did not. I stood motionless as a statue in my dark grey niche, till the objects before me became indistinct in twilight,—till the last slanting sunbeams had withdrawn from the highest panes of the church window,—till the blackbird's song was hushed, and the baby's voice was still, and the mother and her nursling had retreated into their quiet dwelling, and the evening taper gleamed through the fallen white curtain, and still open window. But yet before that curtain fell, another act of the beautiful pantomime had passed in review before me. The mother, with her infant in her arms, had seated herself in a low chair within the little parlour. She untied the frock-strings, drew off that and the second upper garments dexterously, and at intervals, as the restless frolics of the still unwearied babe afforded opportunity; and there it was in its little

coat and stay, the fat white shoulders shrugged up in antic merriment far above the slackened shoulder-straps. Then the mother's hand slipped off one soft red shoe; and, having done so, her lips were pressed, almost, as it seemed, involuntarily, to the little naked foot she still held. The other, as if in proud love of liberty, had spurned off to a distance the fellow shoe; and now the darling, disarrayed for its innocent slumbers, was hushed and quieted, but not yet to rest; the night-dress was still to be put on, and the little crib was not there:—not yet to rest, but to the mighty duty already required of the young Christian!—And in a moment it was hushed,—and in a moment the small hands were pressed together between the mother's hands, and the sweet serious eyes were raised and fixed upon the mother's eyes, (there beamed, as yet, the infant's heaven,) and one saw that it was lisping out its unconscious prayer—unconscious, not surely unaccepted. A kiss from the maternal lips was the token of God's approval:—and then she rose, and, gathering up the scattered garments in the same clasp with the half-naked babe, she held it smiling to its father, and one saw in the expression of his

face, as he upraised it after having imprinted a kiss on that of his child,—one saw in it all the holy fervour of a father's blessing.

Then the mother withdrew with her little one—and then the curtain fell,—and still I lingered; for, after the interval of a few minutes, sweet sounds arrested my departing footsteps. A few notes of the harp, a low prelude stole sweetly out,—a voice still sweeter, mingling its tones with a simple, quiet accompaniment, swelled out gradually into a strain of sacred harmony, and the words of the evening hymn came wafted towards the house of prayer. Then all was still in the cottage, and around it; and the perfect silence, and the deepening shadows, brought to my mind more forcibly the lateness of the hour, and warned me to turn my face homewards. So I moved a few steps, and yet again I lingered, lingered still; for the moon was rising, and the stars were shining out in the clear, cloudless Heaven, and the bright reflection of one danced and glittered, like a liquid fire-fly, on the ripple of the stream, just where it glided into a darker, deeper pool, beneath a little rustic foot-bridge, which led from the churchyard into a shady

green lane, communicating with the neighbouring hamlet.

On that bridge I stopped a minute longer,—and yet another and another minute,—for I listened to the voice of the running water; and methought it was yet more mellifluous, more soothing, more eloquent, at that still shadowy hour, when only that little star looked down upon it with its tremulous beam, than when it danced and glittered in the warm glow of sunshine. There are hearts like that stream, and they will understand the metaphor.

The unutterable things I felt and heard in that mysterious music!—Every sense became absorbed in that of hearing; and so spell-bound, I might have staid on that very spot till midnight, nay, till the stars paled before the morning beam, if the deep, solemn sound of the old church clock had not broken in on my dream of profound abstraction, and startled me away with half incredulous surprise, as its iron tongue proclaimed, stroke after stroke, the tenth hour of the night.

CHAPTER III.

WITHIN a short distance of my own habitation stands a picturesque old church, remote from any town or hamlet, save that village of the dead contained within the precincts of its own sequestered burial-ground. It is, however, the parish church of a large rural district, comprising several small hamlets, and numerous farms and cottages, together with the scattered residences of the neighbouring gentry; and hither (there being no other place of worship within the parish boundary) its population may be seen for the most part resorting on Sundays, by various roads, lanes, heath-tracks, coppice and field-paths, all diverging from that consecrated centre. The church itself, nearly in the midst of a very beautiful churchyard, rich in old carved head-stones, and bright verdure roofing the nameless graves—the church itself stands on the brow of a

finely wooded knoll. commanding a diversified expanse of heath, forest, and cultivated land; and it is a beautiful sight on Sundays, on a fine autumn Sunday in particular, when the ferns are assuming their rich browns, and the forest trees their exquisite gradations of colour, such as no limner upon earth can paint—to see the people approaching in all directions, now winding in long straggling files over the open common, now abruptly disappearing amongst its innumerable shrubby declivities, and again emerging into sight through the boles of the old oaks that encircle the churchyard, standing in their majestic beauty, like sentinels over the slumbers of the dead. From two several quarters across the heath, approach the more condensed currents of the living stream ; one, the inhabitants of a far distant hamlet, the other, comprising the population of two smaller ones within a shorter distance of the church. And from many lanes and leafy glades, and through many field-paths and stiles, advance small groups of neighbours, and families, and social pairs, and here and there a solitary aged person, who totters leisurely along, supported by his trusty companion, his stout oak staff, not undutifully con-

signed by his neglectful children to that silent companionship, but willingly loitering behind to enjoy the luxury of the aged, the warmth of the cheerful sunbeams, the serene beauty of nature, the fruitful aspect of the ripening corn-fields, the sound of near and mirthful voices, the voices of children and grandchildren, and a sense of quiet happiness, partaking surely of that peace which passeth all understanding.

And sometimes the venerable Elder comes, accompanied by his old faithful helpmate; and then they may be seen once more side by side, her arm again locked within his as in the days of courtship, not, as then, resting on his more vigorous frame, for they have grown old and feeble together; and of the twain, the burthen of years lies heaviest upon the husband, for his has been the hardest portion of labour. In the prime of life, during the full flush of his manly vigour, and of her healthful comeliness, he was wont to walk sturdily onward, discoursing between whiles with his buxom partner, as she followed with her little ones; but now they are grown up into men and women, dispersed about in their several stations, and have themselves

young ones to care and provide for; and the old couple are, as it were, left to begin the world again, alone in their quiet cottage. Those two alone together, as when they entered it fifty years agone, bridegroom and bride—alone, but not forsaken—sons, and daughters, and grandchildren, as each can snatch an interval of leisure, or when the labours of the day are over, come dropping in under the honeysuckle porch, with their hearty greetings; and many a chubby great-grandchild finds its frequent way to Grannum's cottage; many a school truant, and many a "toddlin' wee thing," whose little hand can hardly reach the latch of the low wicket, but whose baby call of "flichterin' noise an' glee" gains free and fond admittance. And now they are on their way together, the old man and his wife. See!—they have just passed through the last field-gate leading thitherward to the church. They are on their way together towards the house of God, and towards the place where they shall soon lie down to rest "in sure and certain hope;" and they lean on one another for mutual support; and would it not seem as they are thus again drawn closer together, as

they approach nearer to the term of their earthly union, as if it were a type and token of an eternal reunion in a better and a happier state?

I love to gaze upon that venerable pair,—ay, even to note their decent, antiquated Sabbath raiment. What mortal tailor—no *modern one to be sure*—can have carved out that coat of indescribable colour—something of orange tawny with a reddish tinge! I suspect it has once been a rich Devonshire brown, and perhaps the wedding-suit of the squire's grandfather, for it *has had* a silk lining, and it *has been* trimmed with some sort of lace, gold probably; and there adown each side are still the resplendent rows of embossed, basket-work, gilt buttons, as large as crown-pieces—it must have been the squire's grandfather's wedding-suit. And how snowy-white, and how neatly plaited is the single edge of his old dame's plain mob cap, surmounted by that little black poke bonnet, flounced with rusty lace, and secured upon her head, not by strings, but by two long black corking pins! That bit of black lace, of *real* lace, is a treasured remnant of what once trimmed her mistress's best cloak, when she herself was a blithe

and buxom lass, in the days of her happy servitude; and the very cloak itself, once a rich mode silk of ample dimensions, now narrowed and curtailed to repair, with many cunning ingraftings, the ravages of time—the very cloak itself, with a scrap of the same lace frilled round the neck, is still worn on Sundays, through the summer and autumn, till early frosts and keener winds pierce through the thin old silk, and the good red hooded cloak is substituted in its stead.

They have reached the church-yard wicket; they have passed through it now, and wherefore do they turn aside from the path, a few steps beyond it, and stop and look down upon that grassy hillock? It is no recent grave, the daisies are thickly matted on its green sod, and the heap itself has sunk to a level nearly even with the flat ground. The little headstone is half-buried too, but you may read thereon the few words, the only ones ever engraven there—"William Moss, aged 22." Few living now remember William Moss. Few at least think of him. The playmates of his childhood, the companions of his youth, his brothers and sisters, pass weekly by his lonely grave, and none turn a-

side to look upon it, or to think of him who sleeps beneath. But in the hearts of his parents, the memory of their dead child is as fresh as their affections for their living children. He is not *dead to them*, though, eight-and-twenty years ago, they saw that turf heaped over his coffin—over the coffin of their eldest born. He is not dead to them; and every Sabbath-day they tarry a moment by his lowly grave, and even now, as they look thereon in silence, does not the heart of each parent whisper, as if to the sleeper below—"My son! we shall go to thee, though thou shalt not return to us."

Look down yonder under those arching hawthorns!—what mischief is confederating there amongst those sunburnt, curly-pated boys, clustering together, over the stile and about it, like a bunch of swarming bees? The confused sound of their voices is like the hum of a swarm too; and they are debating of grave and weighty matters,—of nuts ripening in thick clusters down in Fairlee Copse,—of trouts, of prodigious magnitude, leaping by the bridge below the Mill-head,—of apples,—and the young heads crowd closer together, and

the buzzing voices sink to a whisper,—" of cherry-cheeked apples, hanging just within reach of one who should climb upon the roof of the old shed, by the corner of the south wall of Squire Mills's orchard."—Ah, Squire Mills! I would not give sixpence for all the apples you shall gather off that famous red-streak to-morrow.

But who comes there across the field towards the stile? A very youthful couple,—sweethearts, one should guess, if it were not that they were so far asunder, and look as if they had not spoken a word to each other this half hour. Ah! they were not so far asunder before they turned out of the shady lane into that open field, in sight of all the folk gathering into the churchyard, and of those mischievous boys, one of whom is brother to that pretty Fanny Payne, whose downcast looks, and grave sober walk, so far from the young miller, will not save her from running the gauntlet of their teasing jokes as she passes,—and pass she must, through the knot of conspirators. Never mind it, Fanny Payne! put a good face on the matter, and above all, beware of knitting up that fair brow into any thing like a frown, as you steal a passing

glance at that provoking brother of yours; it will only bring down upon you a thicker shower of saucy jests.

See, see! that little old man,—so old and shrivelled, and lean and wizen, and mummy-coloured; he looks as if he had been embalmed and inhumed a century ago, and had just now walked out of his swathing bands, a specimen of the year one thousand seven hundred and ten. His periwig is so well plastered with flour and hog's lard, that its large sausage side curls look as durably consistent, as the "eternal buckles cut in Parian stone" that have immortalized Sir Cloudesley Shovel; and from behind dangles half-way down his back, a long taper pig-tail, wound round with black ribbon, the which, about half-way, is tied into an elegant rosette. On the top of that same periwig is perched a diminutive cocked hat—with such a cock!—so fierce!—so triangular!—the little squat crown so buried within its triple fortification! The like was never seen, save in the shape of those coloured sugar comfits called cocked hats, that are stuck up in long glasses in the confectioners' windows, to attract the eyes of poor longing urchins; and his face

is triangular too, the exact centre of his forehead, where it meets the periwig, being the apex thereof; his nose is triangular; his little red eyes are triangular; his person is altogether triangular, from the sloping narrow shoulders, to where it widens out, corresponding with the broad, square, fan-tail flaps of that green velveteen coat. He is a walking triangle! and he carries his cane behind him, holding it with both hands wide apart, exactly parallel with the square line of his coat flaps. See! he is bustling up to join that small group of substantial farmers, amongst whom he is evidently a person of no small consequence; they think him, "as one should say, Sir Oracle," for he knows every fluctuation of stocks to a fraction; criticises the minister's discourses; expounds the prophecies; explains all about the millenium, and the number of the beast; foretells changes of weather; knows something of physic and surgery; gives charms for the ague and rheumatiz; makes ink, mends pens, and writes a wonderful fine hand, with such flourishes, that, without taking his pen off the paper, he can represent the figures of Adam and Eve, in the involutions composing the initial capitals of their names!

He *is* "Sir Oracle;" and not the less so, because people do not exactly know what he has been, and where he comes from. Some think he has been a schoolmaster; others conjecture that he has been a doctor of some sort, or a schemer in mechanics, about which he talks very scientifically; or in the funds; or in some foreign commercial concern; for he has certainly lived long in foreign parts, and is often heard talking to his old grey parrot in some outlandish tongue, and the bird seems to understand it well, and replies in the same language.

There are not wanting some who suspect that he has not been always in his perfect mind; but however that may be, he is perfectly harmless now, and has conducted himself unexceptionably ever since he came to settle in the village of Downe, ten years ago. In all that time he has never been known to receive within his dwelling any former friend or kinsman, and he has never stirred beyond the boundary of the parish, but to go once a-year to the banker's in the nearest town, to receive a small sum of money, for which he draws on a mercantile house in Lombard Street. He boards and lodges with a widow, who has a neat little cottage

in the village, and he cultivates the finest polyanthuses and auriculas in the flower-plot, of which she has yielded up the management to him, that were ever beheld in that neighbourhood. He is very fond of flowers, and dumb animals, and children; and all the children in the place love him, and the old white Pomeranian dog, blind of one eye, who follows his master everywhere except to church. Now, you know as much as I or any one knows of Master Jacob Marks, more, perhaps, than was worth telling, but I could not leave such an original subject half-sketched.

Behold that jolly-looking farmer and his family approaching up the green lane that leads from their habitation, that old substantial-looking farm-house yonder, half embowered in its guardian elms.

They are a portly couple, the farmer and his wife! He, a hale, florid, fine-looking man, on whose broad open brow time has scarcely imprinted a furrow, though it has changed to silky whiteness the raven hue of those locks, once so thickly clustered about his temples. There is a consciousness of wealth and prosperity, and of rural consequence, in

his general aspect and deportment; but if he loves the good things of this world, and prides himself in possessing them, there is nothing in the expression of his countenance that bespeaks a selfish and narrow heart, or a covetous disposition. He looks willing to distribute of his abundance; and greetings of cordial goodwill, on both sides, are exchanged between the farmer and such of his labourers as fall into the same path, in their way to the church. Arm-in-arm with her spouse marches his portly helpmate, fat, florid, and, like himself, "redolent" of the good things of this world, corn, and wine, and oil, that sustaineth the heart of man, and maketh him of a cheerful countenance.

A comely and a stately dame is the lady of Farmer Buckwheat, when, as now, she paces by his side, resplendent in her Sunday-going garb of ample and substantial materials, and all of the very best that can be bought for money. One can calculate the profits of the dairy and the bee-hives, the pin-money of the farmer's lady—not to mention his weightier accumulations—by the richness of that black satin cloak and bonnet, full trimmed

with real lace, and by the multitudinous plaits of that respectable-looking snuff-coloured silk gown and coat.

It is true, her old-fashioned prejudices would have been in favour of a large double silk-handkerchief, pinned neatly down, and a flowered chintz gown, drawn up through the pocket-holes over a white quilted petticoat; but the worthy dame has two fair daughters, and they have been brought up at a boarding-school; and they have half-coaxed, half-teazed their Ma'a out of such antiquated vulgar tastes, though even those pertinacious reformists have been obliged to concede the point of a pelisse in favour of the satin cloak. But when they have conceded one point, they have gained at least two. See the old lady's short sleeves, neatly frilled just below the elbow, are elongated down to the wrists, and finished there by a fashionable cuff, out of which protrudes the red, fat, fubsy hand, with short dumpty fingers webbed between, broad, and turning up at the tips, looking as if they had been created on purpose to knead dough, press curds, and pat up butter; and, lo! on the forefinger of the right hand a great garnet ring set in

silver, massy enough for the edge of a soup tureen. It is an heirloom from some great-grandmother, who was somehow related to somebody who was first cousin to a "*Barrow-knight*," and was herself so very rich a lady—and so the misses have rummaged it out, and forced it down upon their Ma'a's poor dear fat finger, which sticks out as stiffly from the sensation of that unwonted compression, as if it were tied up and poulticed for a whitlow; and the poor lady, in spite of all hints and remonstrances, will walk with her gloves dangling *in* her hands instead of *on* them; and, altogether, the short pillowy arms cased up in those tight cearments, with both the hands and all the fingers spread out as if in act to swim, look, for all the world, like the fins of a turtle, or the flaps of a frightened gosling. Poor worthy dame! but a sense of conscious grandeur supports her under the infliction of this fashionable penance. And then come the Misses Buckwheat, mincing delicately in the wake of their Pa'a and Ma'a, with artificial flowers in their Leghorn bonnets, sky-blue spencers, fawn-coloured boots, flounces up to their knees, a pink parasol in one hand, and a pocket-

handkerchief dangling from the other; not neatly folded and carried with the handsome prayer-book, in the pretty fashion that so well becomes that fair modest girl, their neighbour's daughter, whose profound ignorance of fashionable dress and manners is looked on as quite pitiable, "poor thing!" by the Misses Buckwheat. For what are *they* intended, I wonder! For farmers' wives? To strain milk, churn butter, fat pigs, feed poultry, weigh out cheeses, and cure bacon hogs? Good lack! They paint landskips! and play on the piano! and dance quadrilles! and make bead purses! and keep Albums! and dote on Moore's Melodies and Lord Byron's Poems! They are to be "tutoresses," or companions, or—something or other—*very genteel*—*Ladies*, for certain, anyway. So they have settled themselves, and so the weak doting mother fondly anticipates, though the father talks as yet only of their prosperous establishment (all classes talk of establishing young ladies now) as the wives of wealthy graziers, or substantial yeomen, or farmers, or thriving tradesmen. But he drinks his port wine, and follows the hounds. And then, bringing up the rear of the family procession

lounges on its future representative, its sole son and heir. And he is a smart buck, far too genteel to walk arm-in-arm with his sisters; so he saunters behind, cutting off the innocent heads of the dangling brier-roses, and the tender hazel-shoots, with that little jemmy switch, wherewith ever and anon he flaps the long-looped sides of his yellow-topped boots; and his white hat is set knowingly on one side, and he wears a coloured silk-handkerchief knotted closely round his throat, and fastened down to the shirt bosom by a shining brooch,—and waistcoat of three colours, pink, blue, and buff,—a grass-green coat, with black velvet collar,—and on his little finger, (the wash leather glove is off on that hand,) a Belcher ring as thick as the coil of a ship's cable. Well done, young Hopeful! That was a clever aim! There goes a whole shower of hazel-tops. What a pity your shearing ingenuity is not as active among the thistles in your father's fields. The family has reached the church-gate; they are entering now; and the farmer, as he passes through, vouchsafes a patronising nod, and a good-humoured word or two, to that poor widow and her daughter who stand aside holding the gate open

for him, and dropping humble curtsies to every member of the family. The farmer gives them now and then a few days' work,—hoeing, weeding, or stoning, or, at hay and harvest time, on his broad acres; but his daughters wonder "Pa'a should demean himself so far as to nod familiarly to such poor objects." *They* draw up their chins, flirt their handkerchiefs, and pass on as stiff as pokers. And last, in straggles Master Timothy—(He hates that name, by the by, and wishes his sponsors had favoured him with one that might have shortened buckishly into Frank, or Tom, or—*Tim* won't do, and his sisters scout the barbarous appellation, and have re-christened him "Alonzo." They would fain have bestowed on him the name of Madame Cottin's interesting Saracen, Malek Adhel, but it was impossible to teach their mamma the proper pronunciation of that word, which she persisted in calling "Molly Coddle")—In straggles Timothy Alonzo, but he is even more condescending than his papa, and bestows a very tenderly expressive glance at the widow's daughter, as she drops her eyes, with her last and lowest curtsy to him.

Well, they are gone by, thank Heaven! and the poor woman and her child follow at humble distance to their Master's house.—They will not always be abased there. The widow Maythorn and her daughter Rachel are a very poor, but a very happy pair. Her daughter is sickly and delicate; and folks say, in our country phrase, "hardly so sharp as she should be;" but she has sense enough to be a dutiful child,—to suffer meekly,—to hope humbly,—to believe steadfastly. What profiteth other knowledge? The mother and daughter possess a little cottage, a bit of garden, and a cow that picks its scanty pasture on the waste. They work hard,—they want often,—but they contrive to live, and are content. The widow Maythorn and her daughter are a happy pair!

Yonder, winding slowly up that shady green lane, come the inmates of the parish workhouse—the indoor poor. First, the master, a respectable-looking middle-aged man, with somewhat of pompous sternness in his deportment; but there is nothing hard or cruel in the expression of his eye, as ever and anon he looks back along the line of paupers, of all ages and sexes, so decently marshalled under his

command. On the contrary, he hangs back, to speak a few words of hearty encouragement to that weary old man, who totters along so feebly on his crutches, under the burden of his fourscore years of toil and trouble, and the increasing load of his bodily infirmities. And the grateful look of old Matthew, and his cheerful, "Lord love ye, master!" are eloquent vouchers, that, for once, the man "armed with a little brief authority" abuseth not his trust. The mistress has less dignity, but more severity of aspect, as her sharp, quick glance runs back, often and suspiciously, along the line of females; and she calls them peremptorily to order if their voices are heard too voluble,—and she rebukes the straggling children, and denounces exemplary vengeance against those two detected urchins in particular—detected in the misdemeanour of skulking behind to pull those tempting clusters of almost ripe nuts, that peep so invitingly from the high hazel hedge. But her denunciations are not listened to, it should appear, with any very vehement demonstrations of dread. I believe, o' my conscience, "her bark is waur than her bite;" and that half her terrors lie in that long bowsprit

nose, that looks as if it were sharpened to a point by the cross fire of those little red gimblet eyes, and in the sound of a voice, shrill, cracked, and squeaking, like the tone of a penny trumpet. Very neat, decent, and respectable is the appearance of the long line of parish poor. They are all comfortably clad in whole and clean apparel; and even that poor idiot, who brings up the rear, straggling in and out of the file of children,—(who can restrain his vagaries?)—Even he is clothed in good grey woollen, and a whole new hat, in lieu of the scarlet tatters, and old battered soldier's helmet, with its ragged red and white feather, in which he delights to decorate his poor little deformed figure on week-days, calling himself corporal, captain, general, or drum-major, as the whim of the moment rules his wayward fancy,—each grade, as he assumes it, the most honourable in his estimation. They are gone by, all of them,—men, women, and children—the two culprits still lagging in the rear. I wager they have another pluck at the forbidden fruit, on their way back to the workhouse.

More children still!—marshalled in double files! Boys and girls, three scores at least; each sex uni-

formly clad; the master and mistress leading the van of their respective divisions. That is the subscription charity-school, and the children have just donned their new clothing; and do but see, poor urchins! what hogs in armour some of them look like? Good clothing it is—warm and decent, and of durable material; thick grey frieze for the boys, with dark blue worsted hose, and black beaver hats —*black* hats, at least; and for the girls, grogram gowns, and wild-boar petticoats; (reader, did you ever hear of such materials?) and stiff enough they are, Heaven knows; and as the things are all sent down ready made from a London warehouse, they are of necessity pretty much of the same size, as having the better chance to *fit*, or, at all events, to *do* for all. So you shall see a poor little boy muffled up in a coat that looks like his grandfather's great-coat, the flaps of which dangle almost to the ground; the collar is turned half way down his back, or it would mount up so high as to bury his head, which is indeed already buried under a hat, the brim of which rests upon his shoulders and the bridge of his nose; and when he hangs down his arms, you cannot see so much as the tip of his fin-

gers peeping from within those long enormous sleeves. To complete the picture of comfort, he skuffs along in a pair of shoes, the stiff upper leathers of which reach up to the middle of his shins, and the poor little legs stick in them like two chumpers in a couple of butter churns. Altogether, he looks like a dangling scare-crow set up in a corn-field.

But, then, the little muffled man presents a fine contrast to his alongside mate. *His* long-tailed coat makes him a short jacket. His arms are squeezed through the sleeves to be sure, but then they stick out like wooden pins on either side, with excessive tightness; and there, see! dangles half a yard of red lean wrist, and all the blood in his body seems forced down into those great, blue, bony knuckles. It was a good hearty thump, certes, that jammed down that stiff skimming-dish of a hat, even to where it now reaches on his unlucky pate. The great, flat, *unhemmed* red ears stick out from under it like two red-cabbage leaves; and for his shoes!—the blacksmith would have shod him better, and have inflicted less pain in the operation; for, see! his feet are doubled up in them, into the form of

hoofs, and he hobbles along, poor knave! like a cat in pattens, or as if the smooth green lane were paved with red-hot flints. And the girls are not much better off. Some draggle long trains after them, and have waists down to their hips; others are well nigh kilted; and that long lanky girl there, Jenny Andrews, would reveal far more than a decent proportion of those *heron* legs of hers, were it not that she has ingeniously contrived to tie the wild-boar petticoat a reef below the grogram gown, thereby supplying the deficiencies of the latter.—Well, they are all new clothed, however, spick and span, and all very proud of being so. Even he of the crumpt-up toes, who will soon poke his way through those leathern fetters, and in the meantime limps along in contented misery. "New clothes," thinks he.—"Good clothes! handsome clothes!" thinks Madam Buckwheat.—"Fine clothes! fashionable clothes!" think the Misses Buckwheat.—"Brave clothes! pretty clothes!" thinks the poor idiot, when Monday comes, and he is allowed to resume his old scarlet tatters. All are puffed up with the self-same species of conceit, variously modified, and so are many greater and many finer folks than

they—ay, and many wiser ones too—many more talented. Witness Goldsmith, in his peach-blossom coat; and Johnson, (who ridiculed the poor poet's puerile vanity,) in his gala suit of fine brown broad-cloth. One spread his tail like a peacock, and strutted about to show off its gaudy colours; the other, arrayed like the bird of wisdom, in grave and sombre plumage, was equally proud of the dignity it conferred, and oraculously opined, that a gentleman was twice a gentleman in a full dress suit. Vanity! vanity! thou universal leaven! from what human heart art thou absolutely excluded?

Hark! the trampling of horses, and the sound of wheels. The Squire's carriage sweeps round the corner of the churchyard. He and his family arrive thus early, that the horses may be stabled in that long low shed, appropriated for the purpose, and the servants ready to enter the church at the same time with their master, and to partake with him of the benefit and comfort of the confession and absolution. Some people seem to consider those parts of the service as a mere prelude,—a sort of overture, as hackneyed, and about as solemn, as that to Lodoiska; and if they reach their pews by

the time they are half over, it is well. As for the servants, what can it signify to them?—There alights another carriage load,—and another,—and another,—and the comers in a car, and in two tax-carts, and on sundry steeds; and there the patrician party is congregating together round the great east door; and there stands the clerk, with hat in hand, peering down the vicarage lane, under the penthouse of his other shading hand, for the first glimpse of the minister. Now, he descries the white face of the old roan mare. Another look, to be sure;—it is indeed that sober-footed palfrey, bearing her reverend burthen. And then he turns hastily into the belfry; and immediately the cracked chimes subside into a few quick single strokes, announcing the near approach of the clergyman, and the speedy commencement of divine service. That fine ruddy lad, with the white smock-frock, has been immovably posted at the churchyard wicket for the last half hour. His patience will accomplish its purpose. He is the first to start forward—hat in hand, and smoothing down his glossy yellow hair—to receive the bridle of the old man, which the vicar resigns into the hand of careful

Will, with the usual charges, and a smile, and a few words of kind notice.

The minister has passed into the vestry; the clerk has followed him. A few more strokes and the bell ceases; a few more seconds and the churchyard is left to its lonely silence, and to its quiet occupants; and the living are gathered together, within those sacred walls, to hear the words of eternal life, on the surety whereof, the sleepers without—with whom they must one day lie down in the dust—have been committed to their narrow beds "in sure and certain hope."

But my discourse purported to be of Churchyards only, and I have rambled from my text. No matter; I am come, as we all must, to the churchyard at last, and my next chapter shall be of "graves, and stones, and epitaphs."

CHAPTER IV.

My next chapter, I think, was to be of "graves, and stones, and epitaphs." Come then to the churchyard with me, whoever shrinketh not from thoughtful inspection of those eloquent sermon books. Come to that same churchyard where lately we saw the assembled congregation—the aged and the young—the proud and the lowly—the rich and poor collecting together on the Sabbath morning to worship their Creator within those sacred walls. Many months since then have slipt away—the green leaves have withered, and dropt, and decayed, and the bare branches have been hung with icicles, and bent down under the weight of winter snows; and again they have budded and put forth their tender shoots, and the thick foliage of summer has cast its broad shadow on the dark green sod;

and again "decay's effacing fingers" are at work, and the yellow tints of autumn are gaining on the rich verdure of summer. And man!—the ephemeron! who perisheth as a flower of the field—whose time on earth is like the shadow that departeth—how hath it fared with him during the revolving seasons! How many are gone to their long home, and their place on earth knoweth them no more! How many of those who, when last we looked upon this scene, stood here among their friends and neighbours, full of life and health, and the anticipation of long years to come, full of schemes, and hopes, and expectations, and restless thoughts, and cumbersome cares, and troubles and pleasures of this life! How many of these are since returned to this spot!—Yea—but to tarry here—to occupy the house appointed for all living—to lie down and sleep, and take their rest, undisturbed by winter winds, or summer storms—unawakened by the chime of the church-bells when they summon hither the Sabbath congregation, or by the voices of those they loved in life, who pass by their lowly graves, already, perhaps, forgetful

of "the form beloved" so recently deposited there!

"So music past is obsolete—
And yet 'twas sweet! 'twas passing sweet!
But now 'tis gone away."

This is again a Sabbath day—the evening of an autumnal Sabbath—morning and afternoon divine service has been performed within those walls, and now Nature is offering up her own pure homage. The hymns of her winged choristers—the incense of her flowery censor—the flames of her great altar, that glorious setting sun. See! how his departing beams steal athwart the churchyard between those old oaks, whose stately trunks, half defined in the blackness of their own shadow, half gilded by the passing brightness, prop that broad canopy of "many twinkling leaves" now glittering underneath with amber light, while above, the dense mass of foliage, towering in heavy grandeur, stands out in bold and bleak relief against the golden glory of the western horizon. How magnificent that antique colonnade! How grand that massy superstructure! Lo! the work of the great Architect, which might well put to shame the puny efforts of his creatures, and the frail structures they

erect to his glory, were it not, that He whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, hath vouchsafed to promise, that where a few faithful hearts are gathered together to worship him in spirit and in truth, He will be there in the midst of them, even in their perishable temples. Therefore, though yon majestic oaks overtop with their proud shadow the low walls, and even the ivied tower of that rustic church, yet are they but a fitting portico, an "outer porch," to the sanctuary more especially hallowed by His presence. Neither is their spreading arch, too magnificent a canopy for those obscure graves, so peacefully ranged beneath it. Many a sincere and humble Christian rests from his labours beneath those green hillocks. Many a faithful believer, who has drunk without a murmur his earthly cup of bitterness, because it was awarded to him by the divine will, and because, trusting in the merits of his Redeemer, he cast down his burden at His feet, looking forward, through His promises, to be a partaker of the glory which shall be revealed hereafter. Many a one, "to fortune and to fame unknown," who walked thus humbly with his God, sleeps unrecorded in the majestic

shadow of those venerable trees. But when those giants of the earth shall have stood their appointed season—shall have lived their life of centuries—them also, the unsparing hand shall smite, and they too shall lie prostrate in the dust; and for their sapless trunks there shall be no renovation, while the human grain, now hidden beneath their roots, retains, even in corruption, the principles of immortality, and shall, in the fulness of time, spring up to life eternal.

What histories—not of great actions, or of proud fortunes, or of splendid attainments, but of the human heart, (that inexhaustible volume!)—might be told over these graves, by one who should have known their quiet tenants, and been a keen and feeling observer of their infinitely varying natures! nay, by one who should relate, from his own remembrance, even the more obvious circumstances of their obscure lives! What tales of love, and hope, and disappointment, and struggling care, and unmerited contumely, and uncomplaining patience, and untold suffering, and broken hearts, might be extracted from this cold earth we tread on! What heart-wrung tears have been showered

down upon these quiet graves! What groans, and sighs, and sobs of uncontrollable grief, have burst out in this spot from the bosoms of those who have stood even here, on the brink of the fresh-opened grave, while the coffin was lowered into it, and the grating cords were withdrawn, and the first spadeful of earth rattled on the lid, and the solemn words were uttered—"Dust to dust!" And where are those mourners now, and how doth it fare with them?—Here! they are here! And it fareth well with them, for their troubles are over, and they sleep in peace amongst their friends and kindred; and *other* mourners have wept beside *their* graves, and those, in turn, shall be brought back here, to mingle their dust with that of foregone generations.

Even of the living multitude assembled here this day twelvemonths, how many, in the short interval between that and the present time, have taken up their rest within these consecrated precincts! And already, over the graves of many, the green sods have again united in velvet smoothness. Here, beside that of William Moss, is a fresher and higher hillock, to which his headstone like-

wise serves for a memorial; and underneath his name there are engraven on it—yes—two other names. The aged parents and the blooming son at last repose together; and what matters now that the former went down to the grave by the slow and gradual descent of good old age, and that the latter was cut off in the prime and vigour of his manhood? If each performed faithfully the task allotted to him, then was his time on earth sufficient; and, after the brief separation of a few years, they are reunited in eternity. But here—Behold a magnificent contrast to that poor plain stone!—Here stands a fine tall freestone, the top of which is ornamented in basso-relievo, with a squat white urn swaddled up in ponderous drapery, over which droops a gilt weeping willow—it looks like a sprig of samphire—the whole set off by a blue ground, encircled by a couple of goose wings. —Oh! no—I cry the sculptor mercy—they are the pinions of a pair of cherubim. There are the little trumpeters' cheeks puffing out from under them; and the obituary is engraven on a black ground in grand gold letters; and it records —Ah! Madam Buckwheat—is it come to this?

Is all that majesty of port laid low? That fair exuberance of well-fed flesh! That broad expanse of comely red and white, "by Nature's sweet and cunning hand laid on."—Doth all this mingle with the common earth? That goodly person clad in rustling silks! is it shrunken within the scanty folds of the shroud, and the narrow limits of a cold brick grave? What! in the very flush of worldly prosperity—when the farmer's granaries were overflowing with all manner of store—when your dairy had yielded double produce—when the stock of cheeses was unprecedented—when your favourite Norman had presented you with twin calves—when you had reared three broods of milk-white turkeys, and the China sow had littered thirteen pigs!—just as the brindled heifer of that famous cross was coming into milk—and just as the new barn was built, and the parish rates were lowered, and the mulberry tree was beginning to bear—and just as you had brought yourself to feel at home in your long sleeves, and unfettered by the great garnet ring, and to wear gloves when you were out visiting; and, to crown all, just as your youngest hope—your favourite daughter—had made a splen-

did conquest of a real gentleman—one who had come down from Lunnon in his own shay, and talked about "Hastleys," and "the Hoppera," and "Wauxhall," and the Vild Beasts, and Vaterloo Bridge, and all them there things, and was to install Betsey (the old lady always forgot to say Eliza) lady and mistress of a beautiful ouse in Fleet Street. Oh! at such a time to be torn from "Life and all the joys it yields! Ah, Madam Buckwheat! is it so indeed? Alas! too true—

> "A heap of dust is all remains of thee,
> 'Tis all thou art, and all the proud shall be."

Take care!—never tread upon a grave—What! you saw it not, that scarce distinguishable hillock, overshadowed by its elevated neighbour. It is, however, recently thrown up, but hastily and carelessly, and has of late been trodden down almost to a surface, by the workmen employed in erecting that gilded "tribute of affection," to the memory of the farmer's deceased spouse. A few more weeks and it will be quite level with the even sod, and the village children will gambol over it unmindful of their old friend, whom yet they follow-

ed to that grave with innocent regretful tears, the only tears that were shed for the poor outcast of reason. The parish pauper sleeps in that grave—the workhouse idiot. He for whom no heart was tenderly interested; for he had long, long outlived the poor parents to whom their only child, their harmless Johnny (for they thought him not an idiot), was an object of the fondest affection. There were none to take to him when they were gone, so the workhouse afforded him refuge, and sustenance, and humane treatment; and his long life—for it was extended nearly to the term of seventy years—was not, on the whole, joyless or forsaken. His intellect was darkened and distorted, but not so as to render him an object of disgust or terror, or to incapacitate him from performing many tasks of trifling utility. He even exercised a sort of rude ingenuity in many little rustic handicrafts. He wove rush baskets and mats, and neatly and strongly wove them, and of the refuse straw he plaited coarse hats, such as are worn by ploughboys; and he could make wicker cages for blackbirds and magpies, and mouse-traps, and rabbit-hutches; and he had a pretty notion of knitting too, only that he

could never be brought to sit still long enough to make any great proficiency in that way. But he was useful, besides, in many offices of household drudgery; and though his kind master never suffered poor Johnny to be "put upon," he had many employers, and as far as his simple wits enabled him to comprehend their several wills, he was content to fulfil them. So he was sent to fetch water, and to watch that the coppers did not boil over, and to feed the fire, and blow the bellows, and sift the cinders, and to scrape carrots and potatoes, and to shell beans, and to sweep the floor, (but then he would always waste time in making waves and zigzags on the sand,) and to rock the cradles; and *that* office he seemed to take peculiar delight in, and would even pretend to hush the babies, as he had seen practised by their mothers, with a sort of droning hum which he called singing. But besides all these, and other tasks innumerable, more extended trust was committed to him, and he was never known but to discharge it faithfully. He was allowed (in exception of those rules of the house imperative on its sane inmates) to wander out whole days, having the charge of a few

cows, or pigs, and for a trifling remuneration, which he brought regularly home to his master, who expended it for him with judicious kindness, in the purchase of such simple luxuries as the poor idiot delighted in,—a little snuff and tobacco, or the occasional treat of a little coarse tea, and brown sugar.

Then was old Johnny in his glory, when, seated on some sunny road-side bank, or nestling among the fern leaves in some bosky dingle, within ken of his horned or grunting charge, of which he never lost sight, he had collected about him a little cluster of idle urchins, with whom he would vie in dexterity in threading daisy necklaces, or sticking the little white flowers on a leafless thorn branch, or in tying up cowslip balls, or in making whistles, or arrow heads of hollow elder stalks; or in weaving high conical caps of green rushes; and then was Cæsar in his element, for then would he arm with those proud helmets the heads of his childish mates, and marshal them (nothing loath) in military order, each shouldering a stick, his supposed musket; and, flourishing his wooden sword, and taking the command of his new levies, he marched up and

down before the line of ragged rogues, gobbling like a turkey cock, with swelling pride, in all the martial magnificence of his old cocked-hat and feathers, and of his scarlet tatters with their tarnished lace.

But sometimes was he suddenly cast down from that pinnacle of earthly grandeur, by the malicious wantonness of an unlucky boy, who would slyly breathe out a few notes from an old flute, well anticipating their effect on poor Johnny. Rude as were those notes, they "entered into his soul." In a moment his proud step was arrested, his authoritative, uplifted hand fell nerveless by his side; his erect head dropt, and large tears rolled down his aged face; and at last sobs—deep, heavy, convulsive sobs! burst from the bosom of the poor idiot, and then even his mischievous tormentor almost wept to see the pain he had inflicted. Yes, such was the power of music, of its rudest, simplest tones, over some spring of sensibility, deep hidden in the benighted soul of that harmless creature; and he had apparently no control over the tempestuous ebullition of its excited vehemence, except at church during the time of divine service.

There, while the Psalm was being sung, he was still, and profoundly silent. But when others rose up from the form beside him, he sunk still lower in his sitting posture, and cowering down, bent forward his head upon his knees, hiding his face there within the fold of his crossed arms, and no sound or sob escaped him, but his poor frame trembled universally; and when the singing was over, and he looked up again, the thin grey hair on his wrinkled forehead was wet with perspiration. *Now*, let the clarion sound, or the sweet hautboy pour out its melodious fulness, or the thrilling flute discourse, or the solemn organ roll over his grave its deep and mighty volume, and he will sleep on undisturbed—ay, till the call of the last trumpet shall awaken him, and the mystery of his earthly existence shall be unfolded, and the soul, emerging from its long eclipse, shall shine out in the light of immortality. At that day of solemn reckoning, how many, whose brilliant talents and luminous intellect have blazed out with meteoric splendour not to enlighten, but to dazzle and mislead, and bewilder the minds of their fellow-mortals in the mazes of inextricable error—how many of those

who have so miserably abused the great trust reposed in them, shall be fain to exchange places with that unoffending innocent, crying out, in the agony of their despair, "to the mountains, fall on us, and to the hills, cover us!"

Farewell, old Johnny—quiet be thy rest!—harmless and lowly was thy life!—peaceful and unnoticed thy departure!

Few had marked the gradual decline of the poor creature; but for many months he had wasted away, and his feeble, deformed frame had bowed nearer and nearer to the earth; and he cared little for any nourishment, except his favourite regale of tea, and the mistress's occasional bounty, a slice of white bread and butter; and there was less willingness to exert himself than formerly. He still crept about his accustomed tasks, but slowly and silently, and would sometimes fall asleep over his more sedentary employment; and when spoken to, he seldom replied but by a nod and a smile—that peculiar smile of idiotic intelligence. Some said the old man grew lazy and sullen, for "what could ail him?" they wondered. Nothing—nothing ailed him—nothing to signify—only the cold hand of

death was on him, and he dropt at last with the leaves in autumn. One evening, long after milking-time, the cows he had been intrusted to watch came straggling home without their keeper. Search was made for him, and he was soon discovered by the children, who were well acquainted with his favourite haunts and hiding-places.

They found him gathered up in his usual form, among the dry fern leaves, at the foot of an old hawthorn near which run a reedy streamlet. His back rested against the hawthorn's twisted stem, his old grey head was bare, and a few withered leaves had dropt upon it. Beside him lay a half-finished cap of woven rushes, one hand was on it, and the other still grasped the loose materials of his simple fabric. There was a smile upon his countenance, (he was always smiling to himself,) but his head had dropt down on his bosom, and his eyes were closed as if in sleep. He was dead—quite cold and stiff:—so they took him from his pleasant fern bank, to his late home, the workhouse, and the next day he was screwed down in the shell of rough boards, the last allowance of parish bounty, and before sunset, those green sods were trampled down over the pauper's grave.—Farewell, old Johnny!

CHAPTER V.

A LITTLE longer, yet a little longer, let us tarry in this secluded burial ground. The sun's golden rim touches not yet the line of that bright horizon. Not yet have the small birds betaken themselves to their leafy homes, nor the bees to their hives, nor the wild rabbits to their burrows on the heath. Not yet, sailing like a soft fleecy cloud through the grey depths of twilight, hath the light-shunning owl ventured abroad on her wide winnowing vans, nor is the bat come forth, cleaving the dewy air with his eccentric circles. Tarry a little longer, even till the moon, that pale, dull, silvery orb, shines out unclipsed by the glories of her effulgent brother. Then will her tender light, glancing in between those ancient oaks, sleep sweetly on the green graves, and partially illumine that south-east angle of the Church Tower, and those two long narrow

windows. And then will our walk homeward be delightful—far more so than even in the warm glow of sunset; for then every bank and hedge-row will be glittering with dew in the pale silvery light, and every fern leaf will be a diamond spray, and every blade of grass a crystal spear; and sparks of living fire will tremble on them, and glance out with their emerald rays from between the broad leaves of the coltsfoot and the arum. And then the wild honeysuckles (our hedge-rows are full of them) will exhale such sweets as I would not exchange for all the odours of the gardens of Damascus; or if we go home by the heath-track, the wild thyme, and the widows'-wail, will enrich the air with their aromatic fragrance. On such a night as this will be, I never unreluctantly re-enter the formal dwellings of man, or resign myself to oblivious slumbers. Methinks how exquisite it would be, to revel, like a creature of the elements, the long night through in the broad flood of moonshine! To pass from space to space with the fleetness of thought, "putting a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes," or to skim silently along on the stealthy moonbeams, to lonely places, where wells of water

gush up in secret, where the wild deer come fearlessly to drink, where the halcyon rears her young, and the water-lily floats like a fairy ship, unseen by human eye—and so, admitted to nature's sanctuary, blending as it were in essence with its pervading soul of rapturous repose—to be abstracted for a while from dull realities, the thoughts and cares of earth that clog the unextinguishable spirit with their dense vapours, and intercept its higher aspirations. What living soul, conscious of its divine origin, and of its immortal destination, but must at times feel weary of this probationary state, impatient of the conditions of its human nature, and of bondage in its earthly tabernacle! What living soul, that has proved the vanity of all sublunary things, but has at times aspirated with the royal Psalmist, "Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest!"

Hark! there's a stir near us—a stir of footsteps, and of human voices. It proceeds from within the church; and see! the porch doors are ajar, and also that low-arched door-way opening into the belfry. Those steps are ascending its dark, narrow stair; and then, hark again! from within, a low, dull,

creaking sound; and then one long, deep, startling toll—another, ere the echoes of the first have died away over the distant woods. That sound is the summons of the grave. Some neighbouring peasant is borne to-night to his long home; and, see! as we turn this angle of the church, there, beside that broad old maple, is a fresh-opened grave. The dark cavity is covered in by two boards laid loosely over,—but it will not be long untenanted. Let us look abroad for the approaching funeral, for, by the tolling of the bell, it must be already within sight. It comes not up that shady lane—no, nor by the broad heath road, from the further hamlet—nor from the direction of the Grange farm—but there,—ah! there it is, and close at hand, emerging from that little shrubby hollow, through which the road dips to the near village of Downe. Is it not a beautiful thing to gaze on, in this lovely secluded spot, by the light of that yellow sunset, the mellow hue of which falls with such a rich yet tempered brightness on the white draperies of those foremost in the procession?

It is a maiden's funeral,—that, probably, of some young person; for, see! the pall is borne by six

girls, each shrouded like a nun in her long white flowing hood, and, in lieu of the black pall, a white sheet is flung over the coffin. The lower classes are very tenacious of those distinctive observances; and many a young creature I have known, whose delight it seemed, during the last stages of some lingering malady, to arrange everything for her own burial,—the fashion of her shroud, and the flowers they should strew over her in the coffin —the friends who should follow her to the grave, and the six of her young companions to be selected for her pall-bearers. Almost the very poorest contrive, on such occasions, what they call "a creditable burying"—even to the coarse refreshments distributed amongst the funeral guests. Poor souls! long and sorely do they pinch for it, in their own few comforts, and in their scanty meals; but the self-inflicted privation is unrepiningly endured, and who would take upon him, if it were possible, to restrain that holy and natural impulse, to honour the memory of the dead? See! the train lengthens into sight as it winds up the ascent from that wild dingle. The bearers and their insensible burthen are already near, and there follow the female

mourners foremost. Ah! I know now for whom that bell tolls—for whom that grave is prepared—whose remains are there borne along to their last resting-place. Close behind the coffin comes a solitary mourner—solitary in her grief—and yet she bears in her arms a helpless innocent, whose loss is even more deplorable than hers. That poor old woman is the widowed mother of Rachel Maythorne, whose corpse she is following to the grave; and that unconscious baby, who stretches out its little hands with laughing glee towards the white drapery of the coffin, is the desolate orphan of her only child—alas! of its unwedded mother.

A dark and foul offence lies at his door who seduced that simple creature from the paths of innocence!—A few words will tell her story; but let us stop till the funeral-train has passed on into the church, from which the minister now advances to meet it. That poor childless mother! with what rapid strides have age and infirmities overtaken her, since we saw hert his time twelvemonth holding open that very gate for the farmer's prosperous family, and following them into church with contented humility, accompanied by her duteous

Rachel. Then, she was still a comely matron, looking cheerful with her poverty, and strong to labour. Now, how bent down with age and feebleness does that poor frame appear! The burthen of the little infant is one she can ill sustain, but to whom would she resign the precious charge? She has contrived a black frock for the little creature—probably from her own old gown—her widow's gown—for she herself has on no mourning garment; only an old rusty black willow bonnet, with a little crape about it of still browner hue, and a large black cotton shawl, with which she has covered over, as nearly as possible, that dark linen gown. She holds up no handkerchief to her eyes with the idle parade of ceremonial wo, but her face is bent down over the baby's bosom, and drops are glistening there, and on its soft cheek, that never fell from those young, joyous eyes.

A few neighbours follow her—a few poor women—two and two, who have all contrived to make some show of decent mourning; and those three or four labouring men, who walk last, have each a crape hat-band that has served for many funerals. They are all gone by now, the dead and the living.

For the last time on earth the departed mortal has entered the House of God. While that part of the burial-service appointed to be read there is proceeding, a few words will tell her story.

Rachel Maythorne was the only child of her mother, and she was a widow, left early to struggle with extreme poverty, and with the burden of a sickly infant, afflicted with epileptic fits, almost from its birth. The neighbours, many of them, said, "it would be a mercy, if so be God Almighty were pleased to take away the poor baby; she would never thrive, or live to be a woman, and was a terrible hinderance to the industrious mother." But *she* thought not so, neither would she have exchanged her puny wailing infant, for the healthiest and the loveliest in the land:—she thought it the loveliest, ay, and the most intelligent too, though everybody else saw well enough that it was more backward in everything, than almost any child of the same age. But it did weather out the precarious season of infancy, and it did live to be a woman, and even to enjoy a moderate share of health, though the fits were never wholly subdued, and they undoubtedly had weakened and im-

paired, though not destroyed her intellect. Most people at first sight would have called Rachel a plain girl, and she was, in truth, far from pretty, slight and thin in her person, and, from the feebleness of her frame, stooping almost like a woman in years. Her complexion, which might have been fair and delicate, had she been a lady and luxuriously reared up, was naturally pallid, and, exposure to sun and wind in her out-door labours, had thickened it to a dark and muddy hue; but there was a meek and tender expression in her mild hazel eyes, and in her dimpled smile, and in the tone of her low quiet voice, even in the slight hesitation which impeded her utterance, that never failed to excite interest, when once they had attracted observation. The mother and daughter lived a life of contented poverty; the former, strong and healthful, found frequent employment as a charwoman, or in going out to wash, or in field-labour; the latter, brought up almost delicately, though the child of indigence, and still occasionally subject to distressing fits, was principally occupied at home, in the care of their cow, the management of the little dairy, in the cultivation of their small patch

of garden, (and small though it was, Rachel had her flower-knot in a sunny corner,) and in knitting and coarse needle-work. In summer, however, she shared her mother's task in the hay-field, in mushroom-picking, and in the pleasant labour of the gleaners; and how sweet was the frugal meal of that contented pair, when the burthen of the day was over, and they sat just within the open door of their little cottage, over which a luxuriant jessamine had wreathed itself into a natural porch!

If Nature had been niggardly in storing the simple head of poor Rachel, she had been but too prodigal of feeling to a heart which overflowed with the milk of human kindness, whose capacity of loving seemed boundless, embracing within its scope every created thing that breathed the breath of life. We hear fine ladies and sentimental misses making a prodigious fuss about sensibility, and barbarity, and "the poor beetle that we tread upon;" but I do firmly believe simple Rachel, without even thinking of her feelings, much less saying a word about them, would have gone many steps out of her way, rather than set her foot upon a worm. It was a sore trouble to her, her annual

misery, when Daisey's calf, that she had petted so fondly, was consigned to the butcher's cart, and while the poor mother lowed disconsolately about in quest of her lost little one, there was no peace for Rachel. Every moan went to her heart. But her love, and pity, and kindness of nature, were not all expended (as are some folk's sensibilities) on birds, and beasts, and black beetles. Her poor services were at the command of all who needed them; and Rachel was in truth a welcome and a useful guest in every neighbour's cottage. She was called in to assist at the wash-tub, to take a turn at the butter-churn, to nurse the baby while the mother was more actively occupied, or to mind the house while the goodwoman stepped over to the shop, or to watch the sick, while others of the family were necessitated to be about the daily labour that gained their daily bread; she could even spell out a chapter of the Bible, when the sick person desired to hear its comfortable words. True, she was not always very happy in her selections. "It was *all* good;" so she generally began reading first where the book fell open, no matter if at the numbering of the twelve tribes, or at "The Song of

Solomon," or the story of "Bel and the Dragon." —"It was all good," said Rachel; so she read on boldly through thick and thin; and fine work, to be sure, she made of some of the terrible hard names. But the simple soul *was right*,—It *was* "all good." The intention was perfect; and the spirit in which those inapplicable portions of scripture were almost unintelligibly read, found favour doubtless with Him who claims the service of the heart, and cares little for the outward form of sacrifice.

A child might have practised on the simplicity of Rachel Maythorne; and when April-fool day came round, on many a bootless errand was she sent, and many a marvellous belief was palmed upon her by the village urchins, who yet, in the midst of their merry mischief, would have proved sturdy champions in her cause, had real insult or injury been offered to the kind creature, from whom all their tormenting ingenuity could never provoke a more angry exclamation, than the short pathetic words, "Oh dear!" One would have thought none but a child could have had the heart to abuse even in jest the credulous innocence of that unoffending creature. But the human "heart

is desperately wicked;" and one there was, so callous and corrupt, and absorbed in its own selfishness, as to convert into "an occasion of falling," the very circumstances which should have been a wall of defence about poor Rachel.

It chanced that, towards the end of last year's harvest, the widow Maythorne was confined to her cottage by a sprained ancle, so that, for the first time in her life, Rachel went out to the light labour of gleaning, unaccompanied by her tender parent. Through the remainder of the harvest season, she followed Farmer Buckwheat's reapers, and no gleaner returned at evening so heavily laden as the widow's daughter. For the farmer himself favoured the industry of simple Rachel, and no reaper looked sharply towards her, though she followed him so close, as to glean a chance handful, even from the sheaf he was binding together. And she followed in the wake of the loaded waggons, from whose toppling treasures, as they rustled through the deep narrow lanes, the high hedges on either side took tribute; and though *her* sheaf acquired bulk more considerably than even from the golden hangings of the road side, no one rebuked the widow's

daughter, or repelled her outstretched hand; and *one* there was, who gave more than passive encouragement to her humble encroachments. And when the last waggon turned into the spacious rick-yard, and the gleaners retired slowly from the gate, to retrace their way homeward through the same lanes, where a few golden ears might yet be added to their goodly sheaves, then Rachel also turned towards her home, but not in company with her fellow gleaners. For the young farmer led her by a nearer and a pleasanter way, through the Grange homestead, and the orchard, and the hazel copse, that opened just on the little common where stood her mother's cottage, the first of the scattered hamlet. But though the way was certainly shorter, and there were no stiles to clamber over, and the young farmer helped Rachel with her load, by the time they reached the little common, lights were twinkling in all its skirting cottages, and the returned gleaners were gathered round their frugal supper-boards, and the Widow Maythorne was standing in her jasmine porch, looking out for her long absent Rachel, and wondering that she lingered so late, till the sight of her heavy burthen, as she emerged

from the dark copse, accounted for her lagging footsteps and tardy return. Her companion never walked with her farther than the copse, and he exacted a promise — — — Alas! and it was given and kept, though the poor thing comprehended not why she might not make her dear mother partaker of her happy hopes; but it was *his* wish, so she promised all he exacted, and too faithfully kept silence. So time passed on. The bright broad harvest moon dwindled away to a pale crescent, and retired into the starry depths of heaven, and then, again emerging from her unseen paths, she hung out her golden lamp, to light the hunter's month. Then came the dark days and cloudy nights of November, and the candle was lit early in the widow's cottage, and the mother and daughter resumed their winter tasks of the spinning wheel and the knitting needles. And the widow's heart was cheery, for the meal-chest was full, and the potato-patch had yielded abundantly, and there stood a goodly peat-stack by the door; and, through the blessing of Providence on their careful industry, they should be fed and warmed all the long winter

months: so there was gladness in the widow's heart. But Rachel drooped; at first unobserved by the fond parent, for the girl was ever gentle and quiet, and withal not given to much talking, or to noisy merriment; but then she would sit and sing to herself like a bird, over her work, and she was ever ready with a smiling look and a cheerful answer, when her mother spoke to, or asked a question of her. Now she was silent, but unquiet, and would start as if from sleep when spoken to, and fifty times in an hour lay by her work hastily, and walk to the door, or the window, or the little cupboard, as if for some special purpose, which yet seemed ever to slip away unaccomplished from her bewildered mind; and sometimes she would wander away from her home for an hour or more together, and from those lonely rambles she was sure to return with looks of deeper dejection, and eyes still heavy with the traces of recent tears. The mother's observation once aroused, her tender anxiety soon fathomed the cruel secret. Alas! unhappy mother—thou hadst this only treasure—this one poor lamb—who drank of thy cup, and lay in thy bosom, and was to thee a loving and a duti-

ful child; and the spoiler came, and broke down thy little fence of earthly comfort, and laid waste the peaceful fold of nature's sweetest charities.

The rustic libertine, whose ruthless sport, the amusement of a vacant hour, had been the seduction of poor Rachel, soon wearied of his easy conquest, and cast her "like a loathsome weed away." He found it not at first an easy task to convince her of his own baseness, and intended desertion of her; but when at last he roughly insisted on the discontinuance of her importunate claims, and the simple mind of his poor victim once fully comprehended his inhuman will, she would have obeyed it in upbraiding silence; but, alas! her injuries were not to be concealed, and it was the hard task of the afflicted mother to appeal for such miserable compensation as the parish could enforce, to support her unhappy child in the hour of trial, and to assist in maintaining the fatherless little one. Three months ago it was born into this hard, bleak world; and though the child of shame, and poverty, and abandonment, never was the heir of a mighty dukedom more fondly welcomed, more dotingly gazed on, more tenderly nursed, than that poor baby: and

it was a lovely infant. How many a rich and childless pair would have yielded up even to the half of all their substance, to be the parents of such a goodly creature! All the sorrows of the forsaken mother, all her rejected affections, all her intense capabilities of loving, became so absorbed and concentrated in her maternal feelings, that when she looked upon her child, and hugged it to her bosom, and drank in at her eyes the sweetness of its innocent smiles, it would have been difficult, perhaps, to have kept alive in her poor simple mind a repentant sorrow for her past fault, as associated with the existence of that guiltless creature. No one judged hardly of poor Rachel, though many a muttered curse, "not loud, but deep," was imprecated on her heartless seducer. *She* was still a welcome guest in every cottage—she who had ever been so ready with all her little services to every soul who needed them, was now welcome to sit with her infant in the low nursing-chair beside their humble hearths, or to lay it in the same cradle with their own little ones, while she busied herself at her task of needle-work. It was a great comfort to the anxious mother to know, that, while

she was absent from her cottage, her daughter had many a friend, and many a home, to which she might resort when her own was lonely, or when the peculiar symptoms with which she was familiar, warned her of an approaching fit. On such occasions, (and she had generally sufficient notice,) experience had taught her, that by flinging herself flat down on her face, either on the bed or floor, the attack was greatly mitigated in violence, and sometimes wholly averted; and it had been hitherto an especial mercy, that the afflictive malady had never made its terrific approaches in the night season. Therefore it was, that the Widow Maythorne now and then ventured to sleep from home, when engaged in one of her various occupations, nurse-tending. So engaged, she left her cottage one evening of last week, and, not expecting to return to it before the afternoon of the ensuing day, she made it her provident request to a neighbour, that, if Rachel did not look in on her early in the morning, she would step across and see how it fared with her and her baby. Morning came, and the good-woman was stirring early; and soon

every cottage lattice was flung open, and every door unclosed, and the blue smoke curled up from every chimney but that of the Widow Maythorne's dwelling. There, door and window continued fast, and the little muslin curtain was undrawn from within the chamber-window. So the friendly neighbour, mindful of her promise, stepped across to the silent cottage, and it was not without an apprehensive feeling, that she lifted up the latch of the garden wicket, before which stood the old cow waiting to be disburthened of her milky treasure, and lowing out, at intervals, her uneasy impatience at the unusual tardiness of her kind mistress. Fast was the door, and fast the chamber-window, and that of the little kitchen, and cold was the hearth within, and all was still as death, and no noise answered to the repeated knocks and calls of the friendly neighbour. She tried the chamber casement, but it was fastened within, and the little curtain drawn before it precluded all view of the interior. But, while the dame stood close to it, with her face glued to the glass, her ear caught an indistinct sound, and in a moment she distinguished

the feeble wail of the little infant; but no mother's voice was heard tenderly hushing that plaintive murmur.

Quickly the good dame summoned the assistance of a few neighbours—the cottage door was forced open, and they passed on through the cold empty kitchen into the little bed-chamber. There stood the poor uncurtained bed whereon the widow and her daughter had slept side by side so lovingly, for so many quiet and innocent years, and where, of late, the new-born babe had nestled in his mother's bosom. It was still clinging there—alas!—to a lifeless breast. The living infant was already chilled by the stiffening coldness of the dead mother, who had been, to all appearance, for many hours a corpse. The immediate cause of her death was also too probably surmised. She had evidently expired in a fit; and from the cramped posture in which she was discovered, it was also evident her first impulse had been to turn herself round upon her face, so to baffle the approaching crisis. But even at that fearful moment, maternal love had prevailed over the powerful instinct of

self-preservation—she had turned half round, but stayed herself there, painfully supported in a cramped posture by the elbow of her right arm, while the left still clasped the baby to her bosom, and had stiffened so in its last tender office.

CHAPTER VI.

Not far from the town of ——, in ———shire, where I passed some weeks in the early part of the present summer, is the pleasant village of Halliburn, much resorted to by persons visiting the county, sojourners in the adjacent town—health-hunters, view-hunters, antiquity-hunters, felicity-hunters,—*Time-killers* in short; to whom any thing serves for a lion, and as a point in view for an hour's excursion. But there are really things worth seeing in and about that same village of Halliburn, as those friends can bear witness—those dear fellow view-hunters in whose company I explored it.—*They* will remember, how, after sundry and various consultations, as to *when* we should go, and *how* we should go, and at what time, and for how long; and, after consulting the Guide-book, and recalling all we had ever heard reported of this or that place

by *such* or *such* a person—and after all talking together for an hour, and each suggesting a different plan, and one premising, on the *best* authority, that such a road was in an impassable state, and a second rejoining, from still *better* authority, that it was as smooth as a gravel walk—and one prophesying it would rain, and the rest staking their lives that it would not rain—and some proposing to walk, and others to ride—and one voting for a car that would hold all, and another for a brace of donkey carts—the matter in debate, at last, resolved itself into something of a settled plan, our clashing votes subsiding like a parcel of little frothy waves into one great billow; and it was definitively agreed, that we should go to Halliburn—that we should dine early, and set out early, to enjoy a fine, long, summer evening in rambling about there with our books and pencils—that we should go in a car—and that we should go that very evening.

Don't you remember all this, dear friends of mine? and how quickly we despatched our dinner, and how we packed up the pencils and sketch-books?—and how James was sent off for a car, of which description of vehicle *one* of us averred there

were hundreds to be hired at every corner—and how James was gone a mortal time—and how we called him all sorts of names, "loitering," and "stupid," and "blind," and what not—and how he came back at last looking as innocent as a dove, and puffing like a grampus—and how it turned out that there were but *two* cars in the whole place, and that by superhuman exertions he had at last secured one of them—and how we flew down stairs, and found it at the door—and how it was a very odd-looking vehicle, mounted up like a tub upon stilts!—and how it cocked up so behind, we could hardly scramble in—and how, when we were in, we looked at the horse and did not like him, and then at one another and did not like each other's looks—and how we went off at last, bang! with such a jerk, as jerked us altogether in a bunch, with our eight hands up in the middle, like four pigeons in a pie—and how we tore down the street like fury, and whisked round the corner like a whirlwind—and how the beast of a horse pranced and snorted like a griffin—and how *one* of us vowed he *was* a griffin and no mortal horse—and how another of us was partly of the same opinion—and

how we all hated the irregularity of his proceedings, and the jolting, and swinging, and bumping of the tub—and how at last we all attacked the driver, and insisted on getting out—and how we all blessed our stars on once more touching *terra firma*—and how we found out that we had narrowly escaped the fate of Mazeppa, having actually been tied on to the tail of a wild horse, whose proprietor had allotted to us the honour of breaking his spirit, or our own necks.

Out of evil often good proceedeth—our proud spirits were humbled. We had enough of prancing steeds and jumping chariots—we had tasted of exaltation, and were satisfied—we had been set up aloft, and were glad to come down again—so, with meek minds, and amiable condescension, we intrusted ourselves, *deux à deux*, to a couple of donkey carts, and off we were once more !—ours, you know, Lilias, leading the way ! And, don't you remember —can you ever forget—that blear-eyed goblin, that attended us as a running footman, shuffling along by the side of his donkey, and regaling us, *chémin faisant*, with his amiable conversation ? One of his eyes, you know—the right—with its little rusty

tuft of eye-brow, had wandered half way up into his forehead; the other, leaving a long, black, shaggy eyebrow in its natural place, had dropped down hill—languishingly half closed—towards the left corner of his mouth, which lovingly twitched upwards to meet it half way; and his nose was puckered down all on one side into the cheek, by a great red and purple seam; and he was all over seamed and speckled with black, red, and purple,—for the poor wretch had evidently been blown up and half-roasted some time or other, though never the worse for it when we had the first happiness of beholding him, excepting in the aforementioned trifling disarrangement of physiognomy, at which, for my part, I was so far from conceiving any manner of disgust, that I thought the countenance had more than gained in character and expression—which is every thing you know—what it had lost in the trifling point, regularity of features. There was something infinitely piquant—something inexpressibly wild and picturesque (quite Salvatorish) in the *tout ensemble!* The whole face had undergone a face-quake; and sparks of the volcanic flame were yet visible in the one little ferret eye, that gleamed in

his forehead like a live coal as he ran on beside us, now vehemently exciting his donkey to super-donkeyish exertions, now declaiming to us, with all the fervour of a dilettante guide, on views, antiquities, curiosities, fossils, minerals, snail-shells, and Roman pavements. He was a jewel of a guide!—"take him for all in all, we shall not look upon his like again!"

Well, you remember we alighted—*un*lighted, as an old lady of my acquaintance used to say—at the entrance of the village; and there again debate ensued as to where we should first shape our course. There was the church, a fine old church! to be seen, and *perhaps* sketched. There was a famous grotto, of which the Guide-book told wonders; and, lastly, there was, within a pretty walk of the church, an old, old house, the oldest in the county, a manor-house, the property of one of the most ancient families in the kingdom, the family of the De la Veres. That venerable mansion was, I believe, the greatest attraction to us all; but, like dainty children, we set it aside for *bonne bouche*, and decided to begin with the grotto. Strange misgivings crept over us, when we were directed through the vil-

lage street, to the door of a mean-looking house, and told, *that* was the entrance to "the cool cavern, the mysterious grot!" and when, instead of a nymph, a wood or water nymph,—an Oread, a Dryad, or a Hamadryad,—there came forth to greet, and introduce us to the romantic solitude, an old, frightful, painted hag, with her elf-locks bristling out in papers, like porcupine quills, from under the frills and flappets of a high French cap, and in her ears (prodigious ears they were!) two monstrous gold rings, that looked like the handles of a copper tea-urn.

We shrank back at sight of this gorgon; but she strutted towards us with her arms a-kimbo, and there was a sinister determination in the tone in which she said to us, "Walk in, ladies, and see the grotto." *She* looked determined that we should see it, and *we* looked at her claws and her fierce eyes, and felt she was not a person to be affronted; so, as our evil stars had led us to the entrance of her den, we submitted to fate, and followed the sylvan goddess—followed her through a dark, dirty, narrow passage, out at a little mean door, into an enclosed back-yard, about forty feet square, divided

into four compartments, containing a parterre, a wilderness, a castle, and *the Grotto !*—and over the entrance to this Elysium was flung a wooden arch, painted sky-blue, whereon it was notified, in gold letters, that " the whole was to be seen for the inconsiderable sum of sixpence a-head;" moreover, that " tea and rolls, and all other refreshments, were furnished on equally reasonable terms."

Oh ye Gods !—so we poor innocents had been betrayed into a sixpenny tea-garden !—and, sure enough, there, just opposite to us, perched upon a grass mound, in the—the—the donjon-keep of the castle I suppose, sat six merry mortals, in a state of earthly beatitude, their faces shining in the red-hot evening sun like fresh-varnished vermilion coach-panels, swilling tea and negus, and stuffing down hot rolls, bread and butter, and cold ham, with most romantic fervour. We paid our sixpences, and made our retreat as quietly and civilly as possible; having first, to pacify our conductress, poked our noses into the dirty coal-hole, stuck with bits of glass, oyster and periwinkle shells, which she called " *The Grotto ;*" and *you*, my dear Lilias, had the complaisance to mount up to the battlements of

the castle, (where, by the by, you looked like sister Anne in Bluebeard,) in compliance with the gorgon's importunities. To *you*, therefore, we were indebted for her gracious patronage, when, on inquiring, as we left the enchanted garden, whether strangers were allowed to see Halliburn House, she replied, with a consequential toss of her head, that *she* was well known there, and that if we applied to the butler in the name of "Madam Simpson of the Grotto," we might be sure of immediate admittance. So much for the first of our three lions; and, truly, we had obtained sixpennyworth for our sixpence, in the patronage of "Madam Simpson of the Grotto."

Five minutes walk brought us to the next object in our itinerary, and here no *shock* awaited us. No human gorgon, no officious guide, no Madam Simpson, to fling open the low white wicket, and cry, "Walk in, ladies, for sixpence a-head."

Sole guardians of the gate, two fine old maples arched over it their interwoven boughs; and many others, and several majestic elms, were grouped together, or stood singly, in and about the churchyard. A few cottages, with pretty, neat gardens,

were scattered around; and, at the further end of a broad, smooth grass-plat, parallel with the churchyard, and separated from it only by a low stone wall, stood the rectory, a long, low, irregularly shaped building of common brick, and with a tiled roof, but made picturesque by the rich and mellow colouring of age, and by the porches, pent-houses, and buttresses, the additions of many successive incumbents, and by a noble old vine, that covered the entire front, a great part of the long, sloping roof, and had even been trained, round one of the gables, up to the very top of a high stack of clustered chimneys.

Behind the church and rectory appeared an undulating sea of foliage, ancient oak and beech, with here and there a graceful feathery birch, glancing and shivering in the sun, like silvery froth above the darker waves; and beneath those venerable trees, winded away a broad, shady, park-like road, to which a gate opened from the lane that ran along behind the church and rectory. That road was the more private approach to Halliburn House, the ancient mansion of the De la Veres; and every object in the surrounding scene was, in one way or

other, associated with the past or present circumstances of that venerable race. The whole village had, in former times, been a fief of their extensive lordship, and great part of it was still in their possession. The living was in their gift, and had always been held by a younger son of their house, till the branches began to fail about the old family tree. The church had been erected by their pious progenitors; and many succeeding De la Veres had beautified and enlarged it, and added gallery and organ-loft, and adorned the chancel with carved and gilded work, and its long window with painted glass, emblazoned with the twelve Apostles, and with the family escutcheon; and had enriched its altar with pix and chalice of massy embossed silver, and with fine damask napery, and with high branched candlesticks of silver gilt, and with scarlet cushions and hassocks, bordered with broad gold lace, and sumptuously fringed and tasselled with the same. And these pious benefactions of theirs, and their good deeds that they did, and the ring of bells that they gave, and the gilt weathercock that they caused to be set up on the church-steeple, and the new face wherewith they did repair and

beautify the old clock that was therein, and the marble font that they presented, and the almshouses that they built, and the school that they endowed—are not all these things recorded, in goodly golden capitals, on divers tablets, conspicuously affixed in sundry and several places in the said church; to wit, over the great door, and in the centre of the organ-loft, and in five several compartments along the panelling of the long north gallery; and to each and every one of those honourable memorials, are not the names of the churchwardens, of the time being, duly and reverently appended?

And on the left, as you go up the chancel, immediately beside the gilded rails of the altar, is the large, square, commodious pew of the De la Veres, to which you ascend two steps. And its floor is covered with what hath been a rich, bright, Turkey carpet; and the damask with which it is lined and cushioned, was once resplendent crimson, now faded to tawny orange, and sorely perforated by the devouring moth. And all the testaments, prayer-books, and hymn-books, lying on the carved-oak reading-shelves, are bound in vellum, embla-

zoned with the arms of the De la Veres, and clasped, or have been once, with brazen or silver clasps. But some of them have bulged out of all bookish shape, and the fine parchment covers have shrunk up like scar and shrivelled leaves. That small, thick prayer-book, in particular, that was once so splendidly emblazoned—One clasp still hangs, by half a hinge, on one remaining cover—the other is quite gone from the curled and tattered leaves. And see! on that blank leaf before the title page is some pale discoloured writing. First, in a fine, delicate, Italian hand, comes the name of:

"Agnes de la Vere—her Book,
Ye gifte of her Hond Mother,
Dame Eleanor de la Vere,
june ye 20the, 1614."

And lower down on the same page is again written, in larger and more antique characters—

"Mye deare Childe dyed
june ye 26the, 1614,
in ye 19the yeare of her age.—
"Ye Lord gave & ye Lord takethe awaye.
Blessd be ye name of ye Lord!"

Those words have been blotted as they were writ-

ten, but not alone by the unsteady *hand* of the writer.

The book falls open at the Psalms.—See! at the xxth morning of the month—and there! there!—in that very place, almost incorporated by age into the very substance of the paper, are a few stiff, shrunken rose leaves! They fell, doubtless, from the bosom of that young Agnes, on that happy birth-day; and before those leaves were withered, the human flower had dropt into the dust! And now, what matters it, or to whom, that the lovely and the loved was taken hence so early?

And all the chancel, and many other parts of the church, are covered with hatchments and monumental tablets of the De la Veres. Of the former, some, so faded and blurred by age and damp, that the proud bend of the milk-white plume, towering from its coroneted crest, is scarce distinguishable from the skull that grins beneath, in the centre of its half-obliterated "Resurgam."—On the right of the altar, just opposite the family pew, is a railed-in space, containing two monuments. One of great antiquity; the other very ancient also, but of a

much later age. Both are altar tombs. The first —once deeply and richly wrought with curious carved work—is worn away (all its acute angles, and salient points, and bold projections, flattened and rounded off) to a mere oblong stone, one side of which has sunk deep into the pavement of the church. Two figures, rudely sculptured, are extended on it. One of a knight in armour—(see! that mailed hand is almost perfect,) and of a lady, whose square head-gear, descending in straight folds on either side the face, is still distinguishable, though the face itself has long been worn away to a flat, polished surface—just slightly indented at the place the mouth once occupied. The upper part of the knight's high Roman nose still projects from his demolished visage; and one can still trace the prominent cheek-bones, and the bold martial brow—

> "Outstretch'd together, are express'd
> He and my ladye fair,
> With hands uplifted on the breast,
> In attitude of prayer:
> Long-visaged—clad in armour, he—
> With ruffled arm and boddice, she."

Their heads repose on a tasselled cushion, and a

greyhound couches at their feet—and on the sides of the tomb— — — is it really impossible to make out any part of that long inscription ?———Surely some words are yet legible here and there—some letters at least. See ! that great R is plain —and the next letter, i—and all the following ones may be spelt out with a little patience—and, lo ! the name that was doubtless consigned to immortality—" Sir Richard De la Vere."—And then ! —lower down, on that third line, the word—"Plan-tagenet."—And then again, " Kge. E—w—," Edward, surely—and those figures must have designated him Third of the name, for immediately after, " Cressy" is plainly discernible. And on the shield—what countless quarterings have been here ! One may trace the compartments, but no more—and the rich mantle ! and the barred helmet ! and then—oh, yes—surmounting the helmet, there are the ducal coronet, and the fine ostrich plumes, the noble achievement of the De la Veres, won by that grim knight upon the plain of Cressy—" Requiescat in pace"—Sir Richard de la Vere !

And on this other tomb are also extended two figures, male and female—and theirs is the fashion

of a later age.—There is the slashed vest, and the bulky padded shoulders and chest, and the trunk hose, and long pointed shoes, with large rosettes, of Elizabeth's or James's era. And the small ruff and peaked beard of the male figure, and the chain, and the great thumb ring—all perfect. And the lady's little jewelled skullcap, and monstrous ruff, and hour-glass shape, and the multitudinous plaits of her nether garments. And on that compartment of the tomb, the shield, with the proud bearings, is visible enough. It hath been emblazoned in colours proper, and patches of gules and azure yet cling to the groundwork, and that griffin's claw is still sheathed or.—And the surrounding inscriptions are all legible. In the compartments opposite, are the names of "Reginald de la Vere," and "Dame Eleanor, his wife, the only daughter and heiress of Sir Marmaduke Hepburn." And in the next, and next, and yet another, of three "fair sonnes," who preceded their parents to the grave—and last—(here is *no vacant* space,) of "Agnes de la Vere, their onlye daughter."—Ah! yes—the same. See there the end of all things! Illustrious descent—heroic deeds—worldly prosper-

ity—parental hopes—strength, youth, and beauty! —" Sic transit gloria mundi."

Look! in that dark corner of the chancel, at the termination of that narrow passage running along from the communion-table behind the two monuments, is a low iron door, just visible from the family pew. More than half a century hath passed away since that door hath grated on its rusty hinges; but before that period, frequently were its heavy bars removed, and down the narrow stair to which it opens, generation after generation of the De la Veres descended to their " dark house of kindred dead," till no space remained unoccupied in those silent chambers. And it should seem that the extinction of the ancient race drew near, from the time that their sepulchral home, having received the apportioned number for whom its rest was prepared, closed its inexorable doors against their posterity. Certain it is, that from about this time the name has been gradually perishing away from among the rolls of the living, till it rested at last with three persons only, the son and two daughters of the tenth Reginald.

That son was named after his martial ancestor,

but the last Richard de la Vere lived and died a man of peace, a widower, and childless; for the wife of his youthful love had been taken from him in the first year of their union; and from the time of her death, withdrawing from the world and from public life, and well nigh from all neighbourly intercourse, he had lived entirely at the old family mansion with his two unmarried sisters, whose veneration for the last male survivor of their ancient race, as well as their strong affection for him, suffered them not to murmur, even in thought, at the life of total seclusion, which, in all probability, condemned them to one of celibacy. So the squire and his two faithful companions lived on together a long life of tranquil monotony, a vegetative dream-like existence, so unruffled by the usual accidents of "chance and change," that their very minds became stagnant, incapable of reflecting exterior objects, and insensible to the noiseless wafting of Time's pinions, that swept by so gently. But those quiet waters brooded on their own depths—on "the long-faded glories they covered;" and perhaps the pride of ancestry, and the feeling

of hereditary consequence, were never more powerful than in the hearts of those three secluded persons, whose existence was scarcely remembered beyond the precincts of their own domain; whose views, and cares, and interests, had long been circumscribed by its narrow limits, and with whom the very name itself, the long transmitted name, would so soon descend into the dust and be extinct for ever. Barring this human failing, and perhaps also the unsocial retiredness of their general habits, which had grown on them imperceptibly, partly from natural shyness, heightened by indulgence into morbid feeling, and partly from the altered circumstances of the family, which they shrank from exposing to the vulgar eye—barring such human failings, these last descendants of the De la Veres were kind, and good, and pious people, beloved in their household and amongst their tenantry, and never named but respectfully, (when named at all,) even by the neighbouring gentry, with whom they had long ceased to keep up any visiting intercourse, beyond the rare occurrence of a morning call. So years stole

on, till age had palsied the firm step of the squire, and silvered the bright locks of the once-blooming sisters.

Then was the last branch shaken off the old sapless tree. Three withered leaves yet hung upon it, to be succeeded by no after vegetation. First dropt the brother; and soon after the youngest of the venerable sisters; and then one poor, infirm, solitary female, the last of her race, was left alone, in the desolate habitation of the once flourishing De la Veres. But if you would know more of that antique mansion, and of its aged mistress and her immediate predecessors, you must come outside the church, for there are *their* sepulchres. There, since the closing up of the family vault, have the later De la Veres made their beds in the dust, though *without* the walls of the church, yet as near as might be to its subterranean chambers, and to the ashes of their kindred dead. These things that I have spoken of—those tombs and those hatchments, and the family pew, and the low iron door—are they not to be seen, even unto this day, in the ancient church of Halliburn? you know, dear Lilias! they so engrossed our attention on

our first visit to the same, that time remained not that evening for our purposed survey of the old family mansion. Besides, the churchyard was yet to be conned over, and the sun was already decending behind the distant hills. So taking our outward survey of the venerable church, and a slight pencil sketch, almost as rapidly executed, we turned our faces homeward, reserving for another evening the farther prosecution of our antiquarian researches.

CHAPTER VII.

The third evening from our first visit to Halliburn church, found us re-assembled near the venerable structure, preparing to complete our survey of its beautiful churchyard, and afterwards to prosecute our further scheme of visiting the ancient mansion-house of the De la Veres. The burial ground was beautifully situated, and finely shaded by majestic trees. Its field of graves, and the intersecting paths, were in that state of neat and decent order which should ever characterize the resting-place of the dead; but it contained no object of particular interest, save that enclosed space adjoining the church to which I alluded in my last chapter. That outer court of death! That supplement to the sepulchre of the De la Veres! It was a singular-looking burial-place!—the most forlorn I ever looked upon. The more so, for being the only

neglected spot in the whole churchyard—the only one upon which the grass was allowed to shoot up in rank luxuriance, intermingled with tall tufts of nettles and mallows; and one felt sad looking on those forsaken graves, as if the poor sleepers beneath them were unkindly excluded from the vaulted chambers within, the dark asylum of their kindred dead. It was a long strip of ground, close under, and running parallel to, the chancel-wall, a projection of the building bounding it at one end, while the other and the outer side was parted off from the rest of the churchyard by a high iron railing. Within that barrier was arranged a single row of graves—eight, I think, in number—mere turfen hillocks, undistinguished by tomb or head-stone, or memorial of any kind, save one, a small, mean, mural tablet of the commonest stone, affixed in that part of the church-wall immediately over the eighth, and apparently the last heaped grave. But, in that poor memorial, the pride of illustrious ancestry, the last sparks of human vanity, were yet legible. The form was that of an armorial shield, though containing only a plain and simply worded inscription; but all the ingenuity of the

rude sculptor had been exercised in carving out the sides of that coarse stone into the semblance of a mantle; and it was just discernible, after some little patient investigation, that the five uncouth lumps, issuing out of a sort of basket on the top, were designed to represent an ostrich plume, surmounting a ducal coronet. And that rude mockery of the family crest had been there affixed, in contempt of heraldic fitness. The name beneath was that of a female, and the inscription ran simply—

"To the memory of
GERTRUDE DE LA VERE,
The second daughter of Reginald and
Elizabeth de la Vere,
Who departed this life May the 27th, 1820,
Aged 79 years."

What a striking contrast suggested itself between that crumbling discoloured stone, "with shapeless sculpture decked," and coarsely engraven with that simple obituary, and the polished marbles, the costly gilding, the "cunning carved work," the elaborate inscriptions, wherewith the interior of the church was emblazoned, in memory of the earlier De la Veres. Not one forgotten there—not one

unrecorded, save the poor sleeper beneath that eighth grave; for, of those who tenanted the remaining seven hillocks, each had his own memorial within, arranged in due succession with those of his progenitors. It is true, that a wide disparity of sepulchral magnificence was apparent betwixt those later monuments and the proud tombs of the long-departed. A marble tablet, with a simple relievo—an urn, a cypress branch, or a funeral wreath,—but on each the family achievement. Such were the recently-erected monuments, and each in succession had abated a little and a little of costly decoration, till the last (that of the late Squire) was a plain square tablet of white marble, on a black ground, bearing the inscription, and underneath the arms of the deceased, not sculptured, but emblazoned in colours proper, on a very small shield slightly elevated. But that plain memorial was of marble, and neatly executed, and had been respectfully added, "in order due," to the long line of family records. Wherefore then, had the name of that poor female, that solitary outcast, no place amongst those of her ancestors and near kindred? Were there none left to honour the memory of

the dead? to take order for the last respectful observances to the latest De la Vere? One sole surviver, the elder sister, had closed the eyes of that last being in whose veins ran the same stream that feebly circulated through her own. And she *had* taken order (as far as her enfeebled powers permitted.) that all due observances should be respectfully attended to, and she had bethought her —confusedly, indeed, but with tenacious adherence to ancient family custom—that "*something* should be done"—"something should be ordered"—some tomb, some monument to the memory of the deceased. And thereupon the village stone-mason was called in and consulted; but the poor lady rambled strangely in her directions, so that, at last, the rustic sculptor was left almost unrestricted to the guidance of his own taste and judgment, except on one point, to which Mrs. Grace steadily adhered, recurring to it as to a *point d'appui*, whenever her poor head lost itself in a labyrinth of perplexities. "The family crest—the coronet —the ostrich plume"—*that* was to be properly conspicuous. "Was not her poor dear sister a De la Vere? Almost the last—but for herself—no mat-

ter!—only—they were to be sure to leave room enough for her name under her sister's; and perhaps some one—her old steward, or the minister—would see that it was engraven there."

Thus commissioned, the village artist went proudly to work, and at last finished off, to his own entire satisfaction, the mural tablet we have seen affixed over the grave of Mrs. Gertrude De la Vere. The inscription had been arranged in that concise and simple form by the rector, who, having been consulted on the subject by the aged lady, had at last prevailed over her bewildered preconception that it should be an elaborate composition—"in Latin, perhaps—something alluding to their illustrious ancestors—to Sir Richard De la Vere, and the battle of Cressy." But the minister was a learned man, and she was content to leave it to him—only, by her express desire, the tablet was affixed without the church, over the grave of the departed. Her motives for this request were never very clearly comprehended; only something she hinted—very distantly, for it was a tender subject—of the altered circumstances of the family—that a poor stone was all that could be afforded

to the memory of its latest decendants; and "that would look poorly," she muttered to herself in a low under tone, "amongst all those grand marbles in the chancel."

It was true that the worldly prosperity of the De la Veres had been on the decline for many successive generations; and, on the decease of the last male surviver, the aged sisters, though for the lives of both left in possession of the family-mansion and its immediate dependencies, had found themselves straitened in the means of continuing the establishment on its footing of ancient respectability. But the hearts of both clung to the things, and the customs, and the fashions as they had been habituated to from their earliest recollection, and they sacrificed many private comforts and indulgencies to the pardonable weakness of keeping up everything, as nearly as possible, in the same stile as during the lifetime of their honoured parents, and of their late dear brother.

So, in outward appearance, little change was perceptible; and while the sisters were spared to each other, the stronger mind of the younger sustained and excited to beneficial exertions the more

timid and desponding spirit of the elder sister. But when the latter was left utterly desolate, then indeed the burthens of care, of age, and infirmity, fell heavily upon her; and a terror of impending poverty (the phantom of a weak and depressed spirit, and distempered imagination) aggravated the real evils of her forlorn condition. Under the influence of these feelings, she had given her directions respecting that singular tablet consecrated to the memory of Mrs. Gertrude De la Vere.

They had been, as we have seen, scrupulously attended to, and beneath her sister's name sufficient space to receive her own had been carefully left vacant. And beside her sister's grave, there was room enough for one more hillock—for *one* more only—to fill up the long strip of ground appropriated to the late De la Veres. An hundred years before, that space had been railed in from the common resting-place of the vulgar dead; but what nice calculator had *then* computed so exactly how many feet of earth would suffice to include (each in his common cell) the remnant of the ancient race?

The broad disk of the setting sun was yet high in the golden chambers of the west, when we turn-

ed from the cemetery of the De la Veres, to pursue our walk towards their ancient mansion-house. Our road lay, as described, through those venerable woods, some of whose noble oaks appeared coeval with the earlier generations of the family; and many of them, in their various stages of decay, were strikingly typical of its long decline and approaching extinction. One in particular arrested our attention. Almost the last of the grove, and now, indeed, considerably in advance of it, from the decay or removal of intermediate timber, it stood singly on the open grass land immediately approximating to the mansion. It had been a superb tree, the monarch of the grove! Its bole, rugged and rifted, and of immense circumference, stood up so proudly steadfast, as if the enormous roots, spreading for many yards around, and heaving through the turf in twisted nakedness, and knots, and curious fretwork, had grappled with the very centre of the earth, and would maintain their hold, till shaken thence by Nature's last convulsions. But the vast trunk was hollow at the core—hollowed out into a spacious grotto, where the sheep took shelter, and the mare, with her young

colt beside her, lay down in the heat of the day. And still the mere shell, with its tough coating of rough mossy bark, was of strength sufficient to bear up the burthen of the forks into which the tree branched off from its centre. Three noble limbs had they been in the days of their vigorous maturity, overspreading the earth, for many roods around, with the broad shadow of their leafy branches; but now despoiled of those, the gigantic arms stretched out their unsheltered nakedness in the stern grandeur of decaying greatness. Two of those forks were completely dead. From one of them the bark had dropped away, leaving it exposed in skeleton whiteness. The third shewed signs of feebly lingering life—a mossy spray or two, on which a few leaves yet hung, but they were pale and sickly, and ready to fall at the first autumnal blast. The road wound along close under the trunk of that old tree. A few yards farther, and we stood before the gateway of Halliburn House.

I never beheld a scene of more quiet cheerfulness than that before us—yes, of *cheerful* quiet—for however the observant eye might trace indica-

tions of decay and change, there was none of neglect and desolation—no appearance of ruin or dilapidation about the buildings, or of slovenly disorder in the homestead. It is true, the broad gravelled road of approach was no longer of that bright colour which tells of frequent renewal, and there were no tracks of carriage wheels, except of such as had passed and repassed for agricultural purposes; but it was hard and smooth, and neatly edged and weeded, and nothing could exceed the fine order, and rich verdure, of the pastures through which it wound. The people were engaged in haymaking that very evening, and the waggons were plying to and fro before the old gateway—to and fro, from the adjoining open rich yard, within which we had a glimpse of objects strangely incongruous.

The coach-house and stables opened into the same area, surrounded on the other sides by barns, granaries, and cattle-stalls; but the line of demarcation was no longer so evident between the two departments, as it doubtless had been in the more flourishing days of the establishment. One large building had fallen entirely into decay, and, to sup-

ply the want of it, others had been converted to purposes wide of those for which they were originally designed. Part of the large barn was metamorphosed into a cart-shed, and a rough, clumsy, broad-wheeled dung-cart was stowed away in the capacious coach-house—(Oh, spirits of the departed De la Veres!)—cheek by jowl with the old family coach! that indescribable vehicle! The coach-house doors stood wide open, and we took a full survey of it. It was in shape like those lackered tin toys, (themselves, I believe, become unfashionable now,) which were the delight of children when I was a child—like the coaches in old prints and pictures, representing the setting forth of Louis le Grand and his Court, to take the air in the neighbourhood of Versailles. It was low, and broad, and deep, and carved and gilded, and all windows in the upper panels. The lower, every one emblazoned with the family arms; the ostrich plume spreading so extravagantly, as if the whole tail of an ostrich must have gone to the composition of each.

Years had elapsed since that venerable relic had moved from its resting-place, except when irrever-

ently drawn forward or aside, to make way for the vulgar associates, thrust into the space beside it once occupied by a towering phæton and a stately chariot—varnish there was none remaining on its blistered and dusty panels; a heap of oat-straw had fallen down from the raftered ceiling on its dishonoured top, and a parcel of clucking hens were pecking about and perching on its wheels and springs; while at one side window, whence in its days of glory looked forth so many fair and noble faces, in awful majesty of plume and periwig, a dunghill cock had taken his bold station, and there he stood clapping his wings, and crowing as it were in conscious exultation. The stable doors were also open, but no pampered steeds were visible in the long range of stalls; two of them were converted into calf-pens; a sick cow was tethered in a third, and by the clumsy rusty collars, and pieces of coarse harness hanging about on the others, they were apparently occupied by the farm horses; one of these, indeed, an old blind mare, suffering from some disease in its legs, which were swathed and bandaged up, was littered in a side stall, over which, on a painted board above the

manger, the name of "Highflier," was still legible. In another, (one of those converted into calf-pens,) we read that of "Cressy." A great grey cat sat snugly trussed up on the broad ledge of one of the stall partitions; a mouser, of such venerable aspect, as if her early days had been contemporaneous with the prime of Highflier and Cressy. Invited by the open gates, and by the absence of the people, we took a brief survey of all these things, and then returned to the great gateway, from which we had stepped aside for a moment.

The mansion-house, comprising its several court-yards, offices, and out-buildings, occupied altogether a large square, surrounded by a stone wall, in some places scarcely breast-high, in others, (as along the principal front,) sufficiently elevated to afford a lofty broad archway, through which we passed into the first court, a square grass plat enclosed on every side by the same grey wall, over which the ivy crept with its tenacious verdure, knotting itself into a leafy mass over the first archway. The second, to which we passed on over a broad stone pavement, dividing the grass plat, was far otherwise surmounted. There, conspicuous in the cen-

tre, was the family achievement, deeply and richly carved, and still almost uninjured by Time's "effacing fingers." It had evidently been cleared even of late from the encroaching ivy; but I smiled to perceive, that one idle tendril insinuating itself round the border of the shield, and through the open fretwork of the coronet, had crept up to the very top of the proud nodding plume, and flaunted, as if triumphantly, above its loftiest bend. Passing under that second arch, we found ourselves in a second court, of the same dimensions, and nearly similar to the first, only that we now fronted the doorway of the mansion, and its principal bay windows. In one corner too, adjoining the house, arose a slender turret, within an arched hollow of which a great bell was visible, and above appeared the face of an old clock. In the opposite angle of the square, flourished a large white rose tree, which had been trained far along the side wall of the court, and also against the house itself up to the very parapet. The elegant trailer was now covered with its pale blossoms, those and the light green leaves, beautifully harmonizing with the quiet colouring of the old stone wall, and the gen-

eral tone of chastened repose characterizing the whole—a repose unbroken, though brightened into mellow richness, by the amber hue of sunset, reflected on the long low front of the ancient dwelling, tinting its grey walls with a soft warm cream colour, gilding the projecting stonework of the rich bay windows, the dentated edges of the parapet, and the angles and pinnacles of the little turret. The grass plats were thrown into deep shadow by the surrounding wall, except that one broad sunbeam, stealing in under the archway, and along the paved walk, brightened its soft turf edges into two lines of emerald velvet, and gleaming onwards, penetrated through the open door far into the interior of the mansion. There was no stir of life—no sound audible, except the ticking of the old turret clock, and the low, broken, tender cooing of a few tame pigeons, nestling here and there on the walls and parapet, or pattering about the grass plats and pavements with their pretty rose-coloured feet, their demure looks, and soft, sleek, quaker plumage. Close beside the house-door, basking in the warm sunshine, lay a fine old hound—Sagacity itself depicted in its grave, mild countenance,

its close hung ears, and long dewlaps, and in the meditative expression of its half-closed eyes. He lay there as motionless as his stone prototype, stretched out at the feet of grim Sir Richard, in Halliburn Church, and it was rather an evidence of the perfect security of that quiet dwelling and its venerable inmates, than of faithless guardianship in the old household Argus, that he shewed no signs of hostility at our approach, nor otherwise noticed us than by half raising himself, with a look of courteous invitation, and wagging his tail, when, on the encouragement of that dumb welcome, we ventured near enough to pat his sleek, old head.

We looked about us—at the upper and lower windows—and through the open doorway, into a broad, low, vaulted stone passage, or vestibule, terminating in the middle of the house in another of similar construction, intersecting it at right angles. No living soul was visible. We stepped over the threshold to reach the knocker of the heavy door, flung back against the inner wall. It was a huge massy door of oak planks laid obliquely, and almost blackened by age, studded all over with great iron knobs, and farther strengthened by bars,

and enormous hinges of the same. The knocker was an uncouthly-fashioned lump of iron, and fell from our hand with a dead sullen sound, when, after a moment's hesitation, (for it seemed almost sacrilegious to disturb that peaceful silence,) we ventured to strike two strokes on the old door. Not even an echo replied to our summons—no, nor to a second, nor a third appeal.

No bell was visible, save that in the clock-turret, and there appeared no visible means of pulling, what nevertheless was probably the usual announcement of visiters.

Loth were we to relinquish our hope of being admitted to see the interior of the house; and, after a moment's consultation, two of us—the two boldest of our party—agreed to steal in, down that inviting passage, in quest of its living inmates, if such there were, while the other two more discreetly re-trod their way to the outer demesne, to ask information of the haymakers. You and I, Lilias, were the daring twain who went in to spy out the land—I foremost in the bold intrusion, but so cowardly withal, that I stole along as motionless as the yellow sunbeam that gleamed onward before

us, like a golden clue, quite to the extremity of the first broad passage, and across the second, even to the opposite wall, against which it flashed upward with a paler ray, melting gradually into the natural colour of the grey stone, and the deep shadows of the vaulted roof. Arrived at the termination of that first passage, the second presented to our view, at one end, the perspective of a half-closed door, at the other, a third intersecting vaulted way, through which again the cheerful sunshine streamed, from some unseen inlet, across the darkness of the central passage. My companion, hesitating to proceed farther, slowly retreated towards the outer door, while I, with true female perseverance, looked, and longed, and lingered, yet, "let I dare not, wait upon I would, like the poor cat i' th' adage." And, lo! while I stood there, that very animal, a fine, large, demure-looking tortoise-shell, came stealing into sight, just in the stream of light which darted down the farther passage. Motionless as I stood, the keen-eyed prowler caught a glimpse of me, and there she stopped for a moment, peering with suspicious keenness, her long body drawn out to its utmost extent, and to the thinness of a weasel,

her eyes glittering like fire stones in the sunny ray, one velvet fore-paw cautiously advanced, the other delicately curling inward, till crouching gradually to the very ground, she slipped away with the swiftness of lightning, and vanished as noiselessly. The glimpse of that living creature lured me onwards, however; for I thought, by following her track, I might possibly find my way to the kitchen or offices. I was not deceived in my conjecture. The first turning to the right afforded to my choice two open door-ways—one leading into a kitchen, the other into a small wainscoted chamber, looking like a housekeeper's room. I turned into the former—a fine old-fashioned place, with a huge gaping fire-place; deep narrow windows in the thick walls—old oak benches and tables, with voluted legs, braced together with massive bars,—ranges of bright pewter and fine old delf—huge round dishes, with scalloped edges—antique tea-kettles—spits on which an ox might have been roasted whole—coffee-pots, and chocolate-pots, and posset-pots, and porringers, and pipkins, little squat things upon three feet, that looked as if they could toddle about by themselves—and vessels and uten-

sils of all shapes and sizes, wares, and metals, whose proper use it would have puzzled any soul to determine, save he, that wight well versed in ancient lore, who has written so learnedly on culinary antiquities. I could have worshipped the very pot-lids! But there was no time to indulge the idolatrous longing, and, alas! no creature visible—no living creature but my tortoise-shell guide, who had taken up her station before the glowing wood fire on the hearth, over which, suspended by a monstrous crook, hung a great black tea-kettle, spitting and sputtering in concert with the drowsy hum of Madam Grimalkin. "I took but one look, and then tore myself away," peeping for a moment, as I passed it, into the adjoining small apartment. That was also vacant—but through the wide lattice window, I spied a small green court, bordered under the surrounding walls with beds of sweet and useful herbs and shrubs, and a few flowers—coxcombs and love-lies-bleeding were trailing on the bright smooth turf—Two sweet bay trees flourished in opposite corners, and everlasting peas clung to the wall, and here and there a fine old rosemary, and many sweet old-fashioned herbs.

Peppermint and basil, and sweet marjoram, and fragrant lavender, had their place amongst polyanthus and sweet-williams, within the feathery fringe of London pride.

Another, and another look, I stole through the open lattice, at that lovely little garden.

The possession of such a one would have satisfied all my ambition as a landholder, but I called to mind the tenth commandment, and turned hastily away to rejoin my friends without. They, meanwhile, had been successful in their application to the hay-makers, and I met them re-entering the second court, accompanied by a little old hump-backed dame, with small, twinkling, three cornered, blue eyes, with red rims, and two pink puckered cheeks, like frost-bitten pippins. She looked like one of the appurtenances of the place, and seemed familiar with everything relating to "the family." From her we learned, that the whole domestic establishment, (now reduced to a very few servants,) had turned out into the hay-field, with the exception of the housekeeper, who had walked into the village, "Miss Grace's maid," (for so the aged dame called her still more aged mistress,)

who was sitting in her lady's sick chamber, and a footman, who was somewhere about the offices, she supposed, and whom she would seek out, and send to us. So we stood quietly waiting in this beautiful court-yard, caressing the old dog, and examining the rich bay windows, while the dame passed into the house, on the mission she had undertaken in our service.

Whoever would know more of Hallibura House, will wait with us, till we learn the result of her embassy.

CHAPTER VIII.

Our old woman was so long absent on her mission, that I suspect the footman she went in search of was also to be summoned from the hay-cart, or the rick-burton. At last, however, he made his appearance from the interior of the house, shrugging up, as he came towards us, (as if hastily slipt on,) a long brown livery-coat, ample enough in its dimensions to have served him for a surtout, and so gorgeously trimmed with broad blue and orange lace, and silver tags, as to be little in keeping with his grey worsted hose, clumsy hobnailed shoes, and soiled cravat, loosely knotted about the open shirt-collar. His honest, ruddy, shining face, gave evidence beside, that he had been hastily called off from his rural labour; and his straight yellow hair was pasted down on his forehead, but not by the artificial medium of *huile antique* or *pommade au*

jasmin. We set him down for the grandson or great-nephew of some old steward or butler; and, through all its native rusticity, there was a respectful intelligence in his manner of replying to our queries, which proved him to have had "his bringing up" in the well-ordered household of an old-fashioned English gentleman. We had further evidence of this as he escorted us through the apartments we were permitted to see, and pointed out to our notice, in a modest, unobtrusive manner, very different from the general style of guides at show-houses, such things as were most worthy of remark, and those amongst the pictures and portraits as were considered most interesting. To our first application to be allowed to see the interior of the house, we received for answer, that it was seldom shown to strangers, and just then that Mrs. De la Vere was seriously ill; he feared it would be impossible to admit us; but if we pleased to send in our cards, his lady might possibly give orders that we should be shown through the lower apartments. We gave him our names accordingly, and, in a few minutes, he returned with the desired permission.

Proceeding through the vestibule, he led us down that right-hand passage to the door I had remarked in my late exploring *entrée*. It opened into a sort of anti-room, which looked rather like a small entrance hall to some forester's lodge, for it was hung about with all sorts of implements for rural sports—Guns, fishing-rods, fowling-nets, landing-nets,—spurs, bits, and snaffles, of all sorts and fashions,—deer's antlers, stuffed birds, and vermin, —and pictures of dead game, dogs and horses, and of various memorable fox-chases;—and a variety of incongruous articles of furniture were here also collected together, as if useless at the present day, but too sacred as ancient relics to be more irreverently disposed of. Amongst others, I noticed a great old bee-hive porter's chair, in which was comfortably cradled a large grey and white cat, with a litter of kittens; and hard by its venerable contemporary, a heavy, high-backed, narrow-bottomed, tapestry settee, with one arm and five legs, the sixth wanting,—the said arm, a bare, lean, wooden limb, poking out from the tapestry, in guise of certain human elbows that I have seen protruding from female sides, over which one longed to draw

down the puckered-up apology for a sleeve, that looked like the puffed-out handle of a basket-hilted sword—desperate inroads had been made by the devouring moth in the wrought covering of that disabled veteran. They had eaten up three-fourths of Holofernes' head, the head and legs of Judith's maid, and the best part of Judith herself; and yet we contrived to make out the story at a first glance, so keen was our antiquarian discrimination.

Through this museum of ancient relics, we passed on into a second chamber, the first glimpse of which drew from us a simultaneous exclamation of delight. Stepping over its threshold, we seemed suddenly transported out of these stupid commonplace modern times, into that old world of romance and chivalry, which looks so picturesque through the mellow haze of antiquity. It was a long vaulted chamber, terminating, at the further end, in a wide and beautiful bay window, one of those that looked into the interior court-yard. The walls were panelled with some light-coloured wood, beautifully veined and polished, and wrought out in the richest and most fanciful carved work in the

deep cornices, and the mouldings round the compartments. The vaulted ceiling was also groined in compartments of the most curious and intricate workmanship; the darker wood whereof the groundwork was composed, finely relieving the pale groining, and showing, to the greatest advantage, the minutest beauties of its elegant combinations. The floor was tesselated in a pattern of large octagons, filled up with small chequers alternately red and yellow, and surrounded by borders of a running chain-work, a deeper edge of which, with some additional ornamental stripes, ran round the whole. Mantle-piece, brackets, skreens, chairs, table,—everything was in keeping in that delightful chamber; and it was hung round with portraits, all interesting from their antiquity, and a few especially so, as rare and curious specimens of ancient art. There were two Holbeins, flat, shadowless, edgy compositions, but characteristic of the unquestionable merit of the artist, and as portraits deeply interesting. They were those of Elizabeth, then the Lady Elizabeth, and of her brother, the young royal Edward, (that brightest gem of England's buried hopes,) of whom the world was not worthy, neither the inheritance

of a mortal crown. The effigies of many De la Veres, and of worthies lineally and collaterally allied to them, were ranged in the other compartments; and I was particularly struck with that of a fair young creature in the earliest bloom of womanhood, whose full heavy eyelids cast the shadow of their long lashes on her soft pale cheek, as she looked down upon the white rose her delicate fingers were inserting in the jewelled stomacher. "Ah!"—thought I, "that must be the fair Agnes; and that picture must have been finished on her nineteenth birth-day; and on that very day, fell from that same white rose, the leaves found so lately in that old prayer-book."—Having thus arranged the story entirely to my own satisfaction, I should not have thanked anybody for telling me I was mistaken—so I asked no questions. I could have dreamt away hours and hours—ay, days and days, in that interesting chamber; but the door through which we were to pass into a third apartment was already open, and I could only linger for a moment on the threshold to indulge in a farewell survey. From that door of communication, one

looked down the whole length of the room to the beautiful bay window—

> "A slanting ray of evening light
> Shoots through the yellow pane;
> And makes the faded crimson bright,
> And gilds the fringe again.
> The window's Gothic framework falls
> In oblique shadows on the walls.
> How many a setting sun had made
> That curious lattice work of shade!"

I never beheld a chamber so adapted for the retreat of a studious, meditative man—so quiet, so solemn, so almost holy, yet untinctured with gloom, was the character of chastened repose that pervaded it! Looking down from that further end, where I stood in shadow, it required no strong effort of imagination to conjure up forms of the long-departed—a visionary group—harmonizing with the scene, the surrounding objects, and the mellow richness of that sunset hour. Place but a pile of ancient tomes on that carved table near the window, a roll or two of vellum, and an antique standish, and in that high-backed crimson chair a fair young lady, "of a sweet, serious aspect," and beside her a venerable old man, to whose grave, plea-

sant countenance her eyes are raised with a questioning look of sweet intelligence, while the forefinger of her small white hand points out a passage in that open folio, whose crabbed character can be no other than Greek. And now she looks up at that opposite picture of the young princely Edward, and the eyes of her venerable companion follow the direction of hers; and then a glance of sympathetic pleasure is exchanged, that tells they are discoursing of England's hope. And, see! a slanting sunbeam stealing upward across the old man's snowy beard, plays on her silken ringlets of paly gold, and on the dazzling whiteness of her innocent brow, investing it with seraphic glory! Master and pupil they must be, that interesting pair; master and pupil—the learned and the lovely—the beauty of youth and age! Who other than the Lady Jane Grey, and her venerable Ascham? All this passed before the eyes of my imagination in about the same space of time that it took the Sultan to dip his head into the pail of water, or the Dean of Badajoz to turn that wonderful page, in the mere act whereof he passed through all grades of ecclesiastical rank, even to the chair of St. Peter,

before Dame Jacintha had put down the second partridge to roast.

My recall from the realms of magic was less disagreeable than the worthy Dean's, however, as, casting behind me "one longing, lingering glance," I followed my friends into that third apartment, which had the appearance of being the common sitting-room of the ancient lady of the mansion. Our guide called it the drawing-room; and, compared with those of the suite we had just seen, its fitting up might have been called almost modern. High panelled wainscoting, painted white, with gold mouldings, and the walls above—the narrow strip of wall—covered with a once costly India paper, the large running pattern of which, on a pale yellow ground, was of scrawly branches, with here and there a palm leaf and a flower, and birds, butterflies, and flying jars and baskets, all edged and veined with gold, dispersed over the whole in regular confusion. The high, carved mantlepiece was decorated by two stupendous girandoles, and loaded with precious porcelain monsters, and other antique china; as was likewise a curious old Japan cabinet at the further end of the apartment.

There was only one table in the room—(Oh, Gothic drawing-room!)—a very small, inlaid, Pembroke table, placed geometrically in the centre of a rich, square, Turkey carpet, which reached not within a yard of the skirting-board. There were *no* volumes of the poets splendidly bound—*no* elegant ink-stands and morocco blotting-books—*no* silver-clasped Albums—*no* musical-boxes, and agate-boxes, and ivory-boxes, and filigree-boxes, and pincushions in the shape of lyres, and pen-wipers in the shape of butterflies, and foreign curiosities, and curious nondescripts, disposed with happy carelessness and picturesque effect on that same table.—No; sacred was its polished surface from all such profane litter,—inviolate, no doubt, since its creation, from all uses save those for which it was especially ordained—to receive the silver tea-tray every evening duly as the clock struck six, and the chased tea-kettle and lamp, and the two rare, old, china plates of rich seed-cake, and wafer bread and butter.

There were two settees in the room—not dragged out higgledy-piggledy into the middle of the floor, according to the indecorous fashion of our de-

generate days, but soberly and symmetrically placed on either side the old cabinet, from which, and from the wall behind them, in all likelihood they had never been divorced since their first establishment there. Noways resembling our square, deep sofas, loaded with down-cushions, or our Grecian couches, or luxurious Ottomans, these venerable *im*movables, with their four little brown legs with claw-feet—(no "wheeling" *them* round—they must have walked if they had moved at all)—their hard narrow seats, and high upright backs, sloping down at the sides into two little wings, spread out like those of an old buggy, looked just big enough to contain one lady with a hoop, or, haply, a pair of courting lovers—the fair one, perchance, in a full-trimmed yellow sacque, with deep ruffles, and peaked shoes, the points of which, "like little mice, peep out" from underneath the pinked and crimped furbelowed petticoat, and her hair strained up so tight over a high cushion, parapeted with little flowers and bodkins, and one small ostrich feather drooping coquettishly over the left ear, as to draw up the outer corners of her eyes like button-holes, adding infinite piquancy of expression to the sweet,

simpering modesty with which she affects to look down on that great green fan. "Then the lover," in a bag and solitaire, a pea-green silk coat, lined with jonquil, an embroidered waistcoat, with prodigious flaps—languishing towards her—the off-leg sticking straight out like the leg of a woodcock—one arm supported on the back of the settee—the other, the ruffled hand at least, with a brilliant ring on the crooked-up little finger, presenting a full-blown rose to the goddess of his idolatry, while he warbles in falsetto,

"Go, rose! my Chloe's bosom grace!"

Many such tender passages, between the former occupants of those old settees, were doubtless rehearsed thereon in the "mellow days" of generations past. To far other purposes were they now devoted. On one of them we remarked a little, short, black satin cloak, lined with squirrel skin, and edged with ermine all round, and at the armholes. It was carefully laid over one elbow of the settee, against which rested a tall, ivory, gold-headed walking-stick; and upon the cloak was deposited a very small, shallow-crowned bonnet, also

of black satin, lined with white; a deep lace curtain round the queer, little, flat poke, and no indication of strings—the cockernonny being evidently fixed on, when worn, by a couple of black corking-pins, which were, indeed, stuck in readiness in a pair of long, brown, snuff-colour gloves, laid palm to palm beside the bonnet—the tip of the forefinger and thumb wanting from the right hand glove.

There were three windows in the room looking into a fourth court, so far differing from the others, that the outer wall consisted of a mere pediment, finished by a stone balustrade, and opening into a fine orchard by a wrought-iron gate. On the massy side pillars of the gateway, and all along the balustrade, were ranged stone vases, filled with white lilies, hollyhocks, red and yellow marvels of Peru, and branching larkspurs; and in the centre of the grass-plot stood a fine old sundial on its rich carved spiral pedestal. Such was the "look out" from those three windows. Between them were two pier glasses, in deep carved gilt frames, having branches for lights affixed to them. Underneath were two marble slabs; on one of which were very methodically arranged a Bible and

Common Prayer Book, Mrs. Glass's Cookery, Broome's Poems, The Book of Martyrs, Pamela, "A Funeral Sermon on the Death of the Lady Cuts," Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy, Jeremy Taylor's Golden Grove, "The *Tête-à-Tête* Magazine," and the Red Book for the year 1790. On the other stood a very antique-looking embossed silver salver, bearing two delicately transparent chocolate cups of egg-shell china, yet exhaling the perfume of the grateful beverage they had recently contained, and a chased gold-handled knife lay beside a very inviting rich seed-cake on a fine old china plate. Beneath those two pier tables stood two most magnificent china jars, containing such pot-pourris as could hardly have been concocted with the cloves, roses, and gillyflowers of these degenerate days—"Poperies," as I once heard the word pronounced by a worthy old gentlewoman, who believed, doubtless, that the fashion of those fragrant vases had been imported among us from the Vatican by some patriotic traveller, who had begged a receipt from the Pope, just as she would beg Mrs. Such-a-one's receipt for "mock turtle," or "calves' head surprised." Before either end window

was placed a small claw table, or stand, supporting, one, a glass globe, with gold fish, the other a splendid, gilt wire cage, containing an old grey parrot with gouty legs, who sat winking and blinking in his swing, croaking every now and then an unintelligible something, except that once or twice he articulated very distinctly, "Pretty Miss Grace!—Poor Puss!—Noble Sir Richard!"

A few framed pictures and fancy pieces were hung round the room in a straight line, very little below the cornice. There was a basket of artificial flowers, delicately and beautifully wrought, from raised card. A shell piece, equally ingenious. A stuffed king-fisher, and a ditto cockatoo to match; and betwixt the twain, a landscape, worked with black silk upon white satin, representing a castle, with four towers, like pepper-boxes. A rock with a tree upon it; the sea washing its base, done in little zig-zag waves in herring-bone, and a tall three-decker overtopping rock, tree, and castle, sailing in stern foremost, "The Cressy" being worked thereon in letters as long as the castle windows. In one corner of the picture, modestly wrought into the basement of the castle, was the name of the

fair artist, "Grace De la Vere—her work, June 10, 1760." And that miracle of female taste and ingenuity was not without its pendant. Another picture, wrought with the same materials, on a similar ground, and in a style as fancifully chaste, but of more ambitious character. It was a scripture-piece, showing forth (as the beholder was considerately informed by a labelled inscription at the top, festooned up by two little cherubims, one of whom was also slyly puffing out in one corner, the name of "Gertrude De la Vere,") the finding of Moses in the bulrushes—a stupendous piece! There stood the Egyptian Princess and her maidens, and the bulrushes, (marvellous tall ones they were!) all in a row, like four-and-twenty fiddlers. And, lo! Pharaoh's daughter was depicted in a hoop and lappets, and having on her head the crown-royal; and then the genius of the artist had blazed out in a bold anachronism, having designed that golden circlet, in the fashion of an English ducal coronet, crested with the five ostrich plumes of the De la Veres! And then one of the attendant damsels, agènouillée before her royal mistress, was handing up to her little Moses in his reedy

ark, in semblance very like a skinned rabbit in a butter basket. And then his sister, Jochebed, was seen sprawling away in the back-ground, like a great mosquito sailing off in the clouds. And the clouds were very like flying apple-dumplings—and the whole thing was admirable! prodigious! inimitable! and well nigh indescribable, though, to the extent of my feeble powers, I have essayed to do it justice. Moreover, there stood in that apartment two large square fire-skreens, worked in tent-stitch; and so well were they wrought, and so well had the worsteds retained their colours, that the large rich flowers in their fine vases—the anemones, roses, jonquils, and gillyflowers, seemed starting from the dark ground of the canvass. On one of those skreens, close to the fire-place, hung a capacious white net-work bag, lined with glazed cambric-muslin, and fringed all round; it hung by one string only, so that a shuttle and a ball of knotting had fallen out from it on a chair along-side. There were a few grains of dust on that hard snow-ball, and on the blue damask chair-cushion, but they were of a nature that set me sneezing, when I took up, with a feeling of melancholy interest,

the monotonous work, which had probably constituted, for so many silent hours, the chief and only amusement of the solitary old lady. That sprinkling of snuff, and the scarcely extinguished ashes in the grate, (the ashes of a July fire!) looked as if she had recently occupied the apartment; and on inquiring of the servant, we were told that she had been down that afternoon for a very short time, but that the exertion had quite overpowered her, and she had returned so ill to her chamber, that it was doubtful whether she would ever again leave it in life. "There had been a great change of late in his lady," the man added; and the parson and the old housekeeper had at last prevailed on her to let them send for a distant relation of the family's, on whom indeed the property was entailed, which very circumstance had hitherto excluded him from Halliburn House,—as Mrs. Grace had been wont to say, "it would be time enough for *him*—a Ravenshaw!—to come and take possession, when the last De la Vere was laid in her cold grave."

I could not help thinking of this *Mister Richard Ravenshaw*, with a sort of jealous aversion, as if I, too, were a last lineal descendant of the old

race whose name was so soon to be extinct in their ancient inheritance.

Slowly, thoughtfully, almost sadly, we retraced back our steps to the door of entrance. Just as we reached it, the last sunbeam was shrinking away from under the arch-way of the outer court, and the old turret-clock struck out the eighth hour of the evening. Its tone was peculiarly mellow, deep, and solemn; or, perhaps the stillness of the place, and of the hour—the shadows that were falling round, and the corresponding seriousness of our feelings and thoughts, combined to swell and modulate a common sound into one of solemn intonation. It must have penetrated, however, (through that deep quietness,) into every corner of the mansion, and was heard doubtless in the sick-chamber. How many De la Veres had listened to that warning voice! Of how many had it proclaimed the hours of their birth, and of their death!—the setting forth of the marriage-train, and the departure of the funeral procession! By how many had its strokes been numbered with youthful impatience, and eager hope, and joyful expectation! By how many more with sad fore-

boding, and painful weariness, and sorrowful retrospection! By how many a quick ear and beating heart, long since stopped with dust, and cold in the grave! And still at its appointed hour that restless voice resounded—and still it told its awful tidings to a descendant of the ancient race—to "the dull cold ear" of age of the last living De la Vere! A few more circles yet to be revolved by those dark hands around the dial-plate, and she too would have closed her account with Time, and the solemn hour of its summing up would be sounded forth by that iron tongue, through the quiet courts of Halliburn, and over its venerable woods! Then, methought—fain would I silence for ever the voice from that old turret, that never sound thereof should announce the arrival of an alien and a stranger, to take rule and lordship over the lands of the De la Veres, and possession of their antique dwelling-place.

CHAPTER IX.

I HAVE no very poetical fancies about my last earthly resting-place—at least no COCKNEY poetical fancies. It would afford me no particular satisfaction to know that my ashes shall repose in the centre of a sweet little pet island, (as the young ladies say,) like a green velvet pincushion in the middle of a beautiful pond, inhabited by Muscovy ducks, and frilled round with lilacs and laburnums —that an urn of the purest alabaster and most classical form, appropriately inscribed with a few words, condensing volumes of simple pathos, shall mark the consecrated spot, overhung by the vegetable weepers of the pale pensile willow. "All this to know," would afford me very little satisfaction. Yet I am by no means without my prepossessions on this matter—equally absurd ones, perhaps, if subjected to the severe test of reason, and

too much divested of sentimental elegance, to interest the feelings of refined taste.

I would fain lie down to rest under the same sod which has received the deposit of my kindred earth. It is in vain that I argue with myself: What matters where the poor frame shall return to corruption, from which its immortal inhabitant is departed?—What matters it how far we sleep asunder from those beloved in life—when it is but for the *night of slumber*—when, at the dawn of the eternal day, the same clarion shall awaken all at the same moment, and assemble us together from the remotest ends of the earth, and from the unfathomed depths of the great sea? It is all in vain that I thus argue with myself, and in my wiser moments strive to think thus. Nature's resistless pleading—her tender infirmity, triumphs over the cold suggestions of reason; and my heart cherishes the fond anticipation that I may be gathered in death to the sepulchre of my people.

Moreover, I would fain make my bed with the lowly in death—I would fain be laid decently at rest—not within the walls of my parish church—polluting the holy temple with corruption—but in

its outer court, the common burial-ground, in the midst of those of all stations, whose faces have been familiar to me, whether as those of friends, neighbours, or acquaintances, or as hearers of the same word, guests at the same altar with me, partakers of the same cup, professors of the same faith, sharers in the same hopes, believers in the same resurrection. Amongst these would I lie down undistinguished, with no other monument than a plain headstone—no other covering than the green turf. Let no cold heavy tomb be laid upon its soft light texture. Methinks I would not have even my grave excluded from the bright sunbeams and the blessed air, whose sweet influences are to me the elixir of life.

Such are the most romantic fancies I have ever indulged with regard to my allotted place of sepulchre. But I will confess one other weak prejudice relating to it. I have a horror, an inexpressible horror, of being committed to the earth of a London cemetery:—those dungeons of death—those black, dismal, wall-imprisoned fields of corruption, more abhorrent to my feelings than the Neapolitan pits of promiscuous sepulchre, or those

appalling receptacles of mortality, where the dead of the Parsees are left exposed to blacken in the sun, or to gorge the carrion birds, who gather unmolested to their accustomed banquet. A London burying-ground is more horrible than these. There the stillness of death is indeed appalling, contrasted with the surrounding ceaseless roar of the living multitude—the stir of the vast city, pouring through all its avenues the tide of restless population. Those gloomy wall-surrounded fields of death are not, however, the most gloomy burial-grounds contained in the metropolis. I have passed some old black-looking parish churches—in the city, I think—half buried in their adjoining small crowded cemeteries—so crowded, it is frightful to think of it—elevated high above the dark narrow street—generation on generation—tier on tier—coffin on coffin piled, heaped up one above the other with unseemly haste—a mound of decomposed mortality, at thought of which, of the more recent deposits in particular, imagination recoils, and the heart sickens.—And then those dingy tombstones, with the black, filmy, sooty pall clinging about them!—those dismal vaporous hangings!—that rank black

grass!—those long yellow sickly nettles! and those pale livid fungi, looking like pestilent excrescences, the horrid fruitfulness of that tainted mould!—I have hurried past those dismal receptacles with averted eyes, and restrained respiration as from the vicinity of a pest-house. And yet once—once indeed, I lingered long and voluntarily within the precincts of St. ———. But I will not name the church. My visit was to one of its surrounding graves, to which I had been attracted by some affecting circumstances which had been related to me of its poor tenant. England had afforded her that last gloomy resting-place, but she was not a native of its soil; and the inscription on the modest headstone placed over her remains, told that "Blanche D'Albi, born in 1801, in the canton of Zurich, Switzerland, departed this life in Lombard-street, London, in the year 1820." Oh, simple record! more eloquent, more touching, than all that poetry and sentiment could have woven into the most diffuse epitaph.

So far from her country, her kindred, and her home—taken away so early, in the very bud of life; there, amongst the dust of strangers, under

those black walls, beneath that rank soil, those baleful weeds, lay the daughter of that lovely mountain land, to which, doubtless, in the happy, sanguine confidence of youth, she had so often anticipated the rapturous hour of her return. All this, and more than this, was suggested to the heart by that brief inscription. But it did not tell all. It did not tell that the young creature who slept below had been singularly beautiful, of the happiest and gentlest nature—engaging to a very unusual degree, the darling of fond parents; the happiest maiden of her happy land, the blithest bird of her native mountains, till——But why not relate at once the few simple notices which have fallen in my way, connected with the brief existence of the young stranger? They will form, at best, but an imperfect and very uneventful story, but such a one as found its way to my heart, and may interest those whose tastes and feelings are yet unperverted by the feverish excitement and exaggerated tone of modern fiction.

Blanche D'Albi, at the time of her decease, had been for more than a twelvemonth resident in the family of Mr. L——, one of the wealthiest mer-

chants in the city of London. She had been engaged as French governess to his four little daughters, who were also provided with an English teacher, and attended by half the masters in the metropolis. the young Swissess had been received on the most unexceptionable recommendation, as to character, connexions, and elegant acquirements ; but nothing more of her private history was communicated, than that she was the only daughter of a respectable Protestant minister; that the sudden death of both her parents, occurring within a few months of each other, had left her, at the age of eighteen, a destitute orphan, deprived of the protection of an only brother, who, previous to the death of their parents, had taken service in the Swiss corps of De Meuron, and had accompanied that regiment to India. So situated, Blanche D'Albi had recourse for her future maintenance to the expedient so often resorted to, even under happier circumstances, by numbers of her young countrywomen.

In company with several young persons from her own canton, embarked on the same enterprise, and provided with such recommendations as could be obtained to mercantile houses in London, or to

such of their own countrymen as were already established there, Blanche bade adieu to her "own romantic land;" and very shortly after her arrival in England, it was her good fortune to be engaged in the family of Mr. L——, where her situation might with truth have been called almost enviable, compared with the general lot of young persons in the same circumstances. She shared the schoolroom, and the task of educating four engaging, spoilt children, with an elderly English governess, to whose domineering, but not harsh temper, she willingly yielded supremacy, and was therefore treated by Miss Crawfurd with somewhat of the indulgent consideration she would have bestowed on an elder pupil. The little girls soon attached themselves fondly to their young, indulgent governess, and their affection soon obtained for her all the good-will and unbending kindness it was in the nature of Mrs. L—— to confer on any human being in a dependent situation. Mr. L——, a man of cold and formal manners, fully impressed with the sense of his own wealth and consequence, but one whose better feelings were not all sacrificed at the shrine of Mammon, treated her with in-

variable and almost attentive politeness, during the stated intervals, when, in attendance on her young charges, she was admitted to his society. It is true, he exchanged but few words with her, and those appeared constrained, as if by the latent fear of compromising his dignified importance; but there was a gentleness in the tone of his voice when he addressed himself to the timid orphan, and a benevolence in his eyes, which carried with them to the young, bereaved heart of Blanche D'Albi, a far kindlier signification than was implied by the mere words of his unvaried formal salutation, "I hope you are well to-day, Ma'amselle?"

Blanche had not only every comfort but many luxuries at her command, especially that which she prized beyond all others, the disposal of her own time for some hours in the evening of each day. Taking all circumstances into consideration, therefore, the young emigrant might be pronounced singularly fortunate, in having so soon found shelter in so secure a haven. And she felt that Providence had been very gracious to her, and her heart was grateful and contented—But was she happy? Who ever asked that question? Who ever doubt-

ed that she was so in a situation so favoured with peculiar advantages? The home she lost, the friends she had left, the brother so widely separated from her, the recollection of her own dear village, and of her young happy years—No one ever inquired into, or interested themselves about all these things. No voice inviting confidence ever interrupted those deep and silent spells of inward vision, when all the past was busy in her heart, and one frank kind question, one affectionate word, would have unlocked—as from the source of a fountain—all the ingenuous feelings, all the tender recollections, all the anxious thoughts and innocent hopes, that were crowded together in that pure sanctuary, cherished and brooded over in secret and in silence, till the playful vivacity of her nature (its characteristic charm in happier days) was subdued into a tone of almost reserved seriousness. At times, during the play-hours of the children, when they had coaxed her to mingle in their innocent sports—at such times the playful beauty of her nature would break out into a gleam of its former brightness; and then her laugh was so joyous, her countenance so sparkling, her voice so mirth-

fully in unison with their childish glee, that a stranger would have taken her for the eldest sister, and the happiest of those four happy children.

Those, also, were among her whitest moments when, encircled by her young attentive auditory, she spoke to them—for to *them* she could speak of it—of her own native land; of its high mountains, whose tops were white with snow in the hottest summer days; of the seas of ice, with their hard frozen ridges; of its beautiful, clear lakes, on one of which she and her little brother had been used to row their fairy bark. Of the Chalets, where, in their mountain rambles, they had been feasted on rural dainties by the hospitable peasants; of the bounding chamois, and of their daring hunters, amongst whom her brother Theodore, and a young friend of his whom she called Horace, had been foremost in bold enterprise; and then she told, how, once returning from a long and venturous chase, the friends had brought her home a little wounded chamois; and the children never tired of hearing how she had nursed and reared, and at last, with success almost unexampled, brought to perfect tameness the wild creature of the mountain;

and how Horace Vaudreuil (they had learnt to speak his name and that of Theodore familiarly) had encircled its slender, elegant neck with a small silver collar, on which was engraven, "*J'appartiens à Blanche.*"

Once the little inquisitive creatures had innocently questioned her about her parents—asking, if she had loved them as dearly as they did their papa and mamma; but then the only answer they obtained was, that the mirthful voice of their cheerful playfellow died away into a tremulous, inarticulate sound; and that, suddenly hiding her face on the fair bosom of the youngest child, who was seated on her lap, she gave way (for the first time before them) to an agony of tears and sobs, that wrung their young hearts with distressful sympathy, and soon melted them all to tears as they clung round her, with their sweet, loving, broken consolations. There is something more soothing in the caressing tenderness of childish sympathy, than in all the consolatory efforts of mature reason. In the first agony of a bereaved heart, or rather when the first benumbing shock is passing away, who would not shrink from rational comforters—from persua-

sive kindness—from the very voice of friendship itself, to weep unrestrainedly in the clasping arms of an infant, on its pure, innocent bosom? It is as if a commissioned angel spoke peace from Heaven—pouring the balm of heavenly comfort on a wound too recent to bear a touch less gentle, less divine!

From that hour the little girls spoke only of Theodore and Horace, when, collected round Blanche, they pleaded for one of her "pretty stories about Switzerland." From the secret indulgence of tender recollections, and dreamy hopes, Blanche insensibly fell into those habits of abstraction too common to persons of imaginative minds, and deep and repressed sensibility; and not unfrequently she drew upon herself the sharp observation of Miss Crawfurd, or the cold surprise of Mrs. L——, by starting, in bashful confusion, at the repetition of some question or remark which had failed in rousing her attention when first addressed to her. It was an evil habit, and Blanche was conscious of its being so; and she listened with penitent humility to Miss Crawfurd's school lectures on the "affectation and ill-breeding of young persons who gave way to absence of mind," and to Mrs.

L——'s wonder at "what Mademoiselle could be thinking of?"

What could she be thinking of?—Oh, Heavens! in that dull square—pacing those formal walks, under those dusty trees—in that more dull, more formal drawing-room, when the prattling tongues of her little charges were no longer at liberty—when she felt herself indeed a stranger and an alien—what could she think of, but of the days that were past, and of those that might be in store for her, if ever . . . . And then there swam before her eyes visions of a white, low dwelling, all embowered in honeysuckle—of a little green wicket in a sweet-briar hedge—and of one who leant over it, idling away the precious moments, long after he had presented the garland or the nosegay, arranged for her hair or her bosom; and then the scene changed to a grass plat and a group of linden trees, and her own dear parents sat under their shade, with other elders of the village, whose children were mingling with her in the merry dance on that fine green-sward, to the sweet tones of Theodore's flute; and then there were parting tears, and inarticulate words—and the agony of young hearts at a first se-

paration—and a little boat lessening across the lake—and waving hands—and the last glimpse, on the opposite shore, of glittering uniforms and waving plumes; and then there was darkness, and fear, and trouble—and the shadow of death fell on the dear white cottage, and a sullen bell tolled—and, yet again—and one funeral, and then another, wound away, from its low entrance, across the grass plat beneath the linden trees, towards the church, where the new minister . . . . .

But the fond dreamer shut her eyes to exclude that torturing sight—and then—and then the harsh voice of some cold observer (all voices sound harshly to senses so absorbed) recalled her to reality, and to painfully confused consciousness of the surprise and displeasure her inattention had excited.

Poor Blanche!—Thou hadst been the beloved of many hearts!—the darling of some!—the object of almost exclusive affection!—How difficult to be contented with less!—How cold, by comparison, the after interest we may awaken in other hearts—even in gentle and tender ones—whose first affections are yet given to dearer claimants!—How hard

to endure the measured kindness of mere well-wishers—the constrained courtesy of well-bred indifference—the unintentional slight of the regardless many—the cutting contumely of the malicious few!—How withering, contrasted with former looks of love, and its endearing tones, the severe glance of a censorious eye—the harsh inflection of a reproving voice!—How bitter to remember all one *has been* to some dear, departed being—and to feel that one *is nothing*, comparatively *nothing*, to any living creature in this wide, wide world!

Some of these sad experiences had fallen not unfrequently to the lot of the fair orphan—had fallen like ice-bolts on the youthful enthusiasm of her confiding nature; but, though checked by that untimely frost, the sensitive blossom had but shrunk inward, nourished in secret by the warm well-spring of Hope, which lay hidden in the deep recesses of her heart.

Twice, since her residence in the family of Mr. L——, the monotonous existence of Blanche had been diversified by occurrences of unspeakable importance to her. Twice had she received letters from India—voluminous letters, penned by more

than one hand, though contained in the same envelope directed by her brother. She wept abundantly over the first of these packets—over her brother's letter—his reply to that in which she had communicated to him their mutual loss, and her own plans to seek an honourable subsistence as governess in some English family. It is easy to conceive the deeply affecting purport of that fraternal answer. Even from that fearful distance, the hearts of the orphans met and mingled. The tears of Theodore had blotted the lines, on which those of Blanche fell, as she read, like summer rain-drops—as free, as fast, and as kindly—lightening her heart of the long-pent-up load of unparticipated grief.

But Theodore's letter contained one written in a different handwriting; and though the tears of Blanche still fell as she perused those characters, they were the last drops of the shower, through which a sunbeam was already breaking. Upon the contents of that packet she might have been said to live for many weeks; for day after day her eyes fed upon them, till one of her little, innocent observers asked, in a tone of artless sympathy, if she were not tired of trying to learn all that close, long

writing by heart, which had vexed her so much, too, at the first reading?

The second letters were as eagerly and anxiously opened as the former had been. But these were read with glistening eyes only, while the rekindled light of gladness beamed on the ingenuous countenance of Blanche; and sometimes, in the midst of some twentieth re-perusal, as if her heart sought sympathy in the exuberance of its happiness, she would catch up in her arms, and half smother with playful kisses, one of the wondering children—as ready, however, at least, to share the joy of their young instructress, as to participate in her sorrows. With those last letters came an ivory work-box, an elegant oriental toy, lined with sandal-wood, and fitted up with many compartments, each containing some ingenious nick-nack—some small tool of fairy workmanship fashioned for a lady's hand, or some exquisite essence in its *flacon* of gilded glass. The delight it was to the inquisitive children to pry, over and over again, into every drawer and compartment in this beautiful box! And Blanche was too sweet-tempered to refuse the often-asked indulgence; only she watched with jealous care, lest

their little, busy fingers should unwittingly injure any part of the delicate workmanship; and if Miss Crawfurd was present, she resisted, with evident annoyance, their importunities to be allowed to take out of a cunning, secret drawer, (which had not long remained secret for them,) two beautiful, little pictures,—"so beautiful!" they said; "and one so like Ma'amselle!"—That one was her brother's miniature; and when they asked her, if she did not love him dearly for sending her such a fine present, she smiled and blushed, and simply answered, that she did indeed dearly love him. The little girls were not long in discovering, moreover, that the return of this dear brother had been announced in his last letter. The regiment was recalled to Europe, and he wrote on the eve of embarkation.

No wonder that, on the evening of that day which had brought her such blissful tidings, the fair face of Blanche was radiant with such a glow of happiness as to attract even the passing notice of Mrs. L——, and the more benevolent observation of her husband, as their young inmate with her pupils modestly approached the awful verge of her drawing-room circle. The exuberant gladness

of her heart was longing to communicate and diffuse itself; and the look and tone of almost affectionate filial confidence with which she replied to Mr. L——'s accustomed salutation, was so irresistibly winning, that it drew from him another and another sentence, till at last he found himself chatting with her, almost with the affectionate familiarity of a father, and had actually gone the length of calling her "My dear!" without being conscious how insidiously the natural kindliness of his nature had encroached on that dignified condescension to which he conceived it proper to confine all manifestations of good-will towards his daughters' governess.

Mademoiselle D'Albi's continuance in the evening circle, or rather in its *out-works*, was usually restricted to the space of half an hour, while the tea and coffee were carried round, and till the bedtime of her pupils, when, with a silent curtsy, she left the drawing-room with them, and having accompanied them to their apartments, joyfully retired to the unmolested quiet of her own. But it sometimes happened, that, Mrs. L——'s party being enlivened by the accession of several young persons,

music and quadrilles became the order of the evening. At such times the talents of Blanche were put in requisition, and she was detained to play for the benefit of the dancers, whose enjoyment was enhanced in no trifling degree by the spirit and correctness of the musician, and by the variety of beautiful airs in which she was a proficient. Poor Blanche! how often, in the days that were gone, had she tripped it to those very measures—the admired of all eyes, and the beloved of all hearts, amongst the lovely and beloved, the happy band of her young companions! It was wonderful (with all those recollections in her heart) how she could sit before that instrument, looking so patient and contented, playing on hour after hour with such unerring touch, and unflagging spirit! Yes—there she sat, regardless and disregarded of every creature in the gay assemblage, unless it were that every now and then some gentleman of the party stole a furtive glance of admiration at the lovely foreigner, inwardly desirous, maybe, that he could exchange his sprawling, bounding partner, with all her newly-imported Parisian graces and frippery clumsily tacked upon English awkwardness, for

that young sylph-like creature, so elegant in her unadorned simplicity; for Blanche, still in mourning for her parents, wore a plain black robe; and a profusion of soft, fair, silky ringlets, one thick glossy braid encircling and confining them like a diadem, were the only decorations of a head remarkable for its classical beauty, and the peculiar gracefulness of carriage which was its characteristic expression.

Sometimes, also, a pair of Misses would saunter towards her during the intervals of the dance, and drawl out a few words of inquiry about some fashionable air, while their eyes were busily engaged in taking notes of the becoming manner in which her hair was arranged, and of the foreign *tournure* of her sable dress.

It so happened, that on the very evening when the heart of Blanche was overflowing with its secret hoard of gladness,—Oh! how long had that poor heart been a stranger to such blissful feelings! —Mrs. L——'s circle was a large and gay one, and a proposal to form quadrilles being suddenly made, and as promptly acceded to, Mademoiselle was detained to take her patient sitting at the

piano-forte. She had always acceded with willing sweetness to similar requisitions, but this evening she sat down to the instrument with even joyous readiness, and the exuberance of her happiness found expression in such sprightly measures, that her flying fingers soon outstript the common time of the dancers, and many breathless calls for moderation were sent towards her from the scampering and despairing performers. Then would she laugh and blush, and shake her head in playful self-reproach at her own lawless performance, and for a while—a very little while—the restless fingers were restrained to slower movements; once or twice she looked towards the dancers, as if with a vehement longing to spring up and mingle in their gay evolutions; but those glances were momentary, and her eyes dropt again upon the ivory keys; but such a smiling and half-exulting playfulness lurked about her mouth, as if she were anticipating some hour of future gladness, when she should join hands once more in the merry dance with the companions of her youth, on the earth—the lovely greensward of her own dear country. Whatever were the fond reveries of poor Blanche, it is certain that

her musical task was so unequally performed that evening, as to cause much discomfiture among the dancers, at length despairingly manifested in their relaxing exertions, and in the tedious, lounging pauses between the sets.

During one of these, a small knot of gentlemen stood conversing with Mr. L——, close to the piano-forte, on which, mingled with music-books and manuscripts, lay several pamphlets and newspapers. One of the gentlemen, carelessly glancing his eye over the miscellaneous heap, caught up a paper with suddenly excited interest, exclaiming, "Ah! here is already a public account of the melancholy occurrence, of which my letters from Madras make mention." Then rapidly he read aloud the paragraph which stated that, "The regiment de Meuron, being under orders for Europe, had been safely embarked on board the transports provided for its reception, all but the last boat, consisting of the Lieut.-Colonel, his lady, and their family, and two young officers of the regiment, when by some mismanagement the boat was suddenly upset in that tremendous surf; and notwithstanding the exertions of the natives on their attending catamar-

ans, every soul perished, except the wife and youngest daughter of the Colonel, and *one* of the young officers, Lieut. D'Albi." Then followed the names of those who had found a watery grave; and the gentleman ran them quickly over, till just as he had pronounced that of "Horace Vaudreuil," a sudden crash of the piano keys caused a general start, and all eyes turning simultaneously towards the young musician, who had been awaiting the pleasure of the dancers in silence, patient and unnoticed, it was perceived that she had fallen forward on the instrument, her face and arms resting on the keys, and almost hidden by the redundance of fair soft ringlets, which had burst in rich disorder from the confining braid.

She was raised up, and conveyed to a sofa in a state of death-like insensibility, from which, after long application of various stimulants, she revived only to relapse into successive faintings. The family apothecary being summoned, by his direction she was conveyed to her chamber and to her bed, and his prognostics were unhappily verified towards morning, when she awoke from a sort of trance in which she had lain some hours, in a high paroxysm of delirious

fever. Great was the consternation occasioned in the family of Mr. L——, by this sudden seizure of the young creature, whose personal importance in the establishment, except in relation to the labours of the school-room and the piano, had hitherto been very subordinate to that of Mrs. L——'s maccaws and Persian cat.

A peculiar horror of all contagious and infectious disorders, was amongst the many peculiar horrors to which the sensitive lady of poor Mr. L—— was peculiarly liable. It was in vain that the worthy man himself, having ascertained the decided opinion of the apothecary, again and again assured her that "Mademoiselle's disorder was a brain fever, which, however likely to terminate fatally, was not of a nature to be communicated even to the attendants of the sick chamber." These assurances, backed by all the apothecary's assertions, were insufficient to allay the lady's *horrors*. "If not *now* infectious, the disorder might become so;" and then *she* was convinced "*all* fevers were catching;" and "If Mr. L—— was so indifferent to *her* safety, *she* could not think of her children and emulate his heroic composure. Not for worlds should they

continue in that house two hours longer—and she felt it her duty as a mother, to be careful, for *their sakes*, of her own life, and to accompany them from that dangerous spot. It was madness in Mr. L—— to stay there. If *he* would be persuaded—" But Mr. L—— was *not* to be persuaded; so after conscientiously fulfilling her duty as a wife, by pathetically warning him of the probable consequences of his obstinacy, she bade him farewell with admirable firmness, and after a last parting injunction from the carriage window, to fumigate all letters he might address to her from *that house*, she was driven from the door, and safely and luxuriously lodged before evening at her husband's Richmond Villa, with her children and Miss Crawfurd. Great indeed—unspeakably great, "she assured all her friends, was her anxiety on Mr. L——'s account; and they might conceive how agonizing it was to her feelings to leave him in so perilous a situation. Had she followed the dictates of her heart—But those sweet darlings! Could she risk the lives of *both* their parents!" And then tears of sensibility trickled from her eyes, at the idea of their orphan state, had she fondly yielded to the temptation of sharing

her husband's danger, and fallen a victim to the indulgence of her tender weakness.

Mr. L—— was truly and humanely concerned for the distressing situation of poor Blanche. So young! so fair! so friendless! so utterly dependent now, in her unconscious state, on the mercy and charity of strangers—on the world's cold charity.—But there are warm hearts amidst the frozen mass—and all the kindly feelings of Mr L——'s were now called into action by the affecting circumstances of that helpless being so cast on his benevolence. He was a fond and anxious father, and as the natural thought suggested itself, that in the vicissitudes of human life, a fate as forlorn as that of the young foreigner might one day be the portion of his own darlings, Mr. L—— inwardly pledged himself to act a parental part by Blanche D'Albi, in this hour of her utmost need; and the vow was not less religiously observed, because unuttered to mortal ear, and registered in the depths of his own heart. By his order a careful nurse was provided, and a skilful physician called in, when, at the close of the second day from her seizure, Mademoiselle D'Albi was pronounced by

the apothecary to be in imminent danger. Dr. M.'s opinion coincided but too perfectly with that of his medical subaltern ; and in spite of their united endeavours to save the interesting young creature intrusted to their care, it soon became evident that the hand of death was on her, and that human art was powerless to unloose that fatal grasp. Previous to her dissolution, she lay for many days in a state of perfect stupor, far less painful to contemplate than the previous delirium, during which she had talked incessantly with the embodied creatures of her fancy, rambling volubly in her native tongue, and now and then breaking out into snatches of wild song or wilder laughter. But at last that fearful mirth died away in fainter and fainter bursts; and broken syllables, and inarticulate sounds succeeded the voluble speech, like dying murmurs of a distant echo ; and "then," as the nurse expressed it, "she lay as quiet as a lamb," for many, many days, with eyes half closed, but not in slumber, or at least only in that slumberous torpor, the gentle harbinger of a more perfect rest.

More than once or twice, or many times, had Mr. L—— visited the sick chamber of poor

Blanche, while she lay like a waxen image in that death-like trance. More than once, as he stood gazing on that fair, pale face, had large tears stolen down his own cheeks—and once, when there was a momentary glimmering of hope—a momentary amendment of pulse—he had caught the hand of the physician with a sudden energy, strangely contrasting his usual habits of formal reserve —exclaiming, "Save her! Save her, my dear sir! spare no pains, no cost,—a consultation perhaps——" and his agitated voice and incoherent words carried conviction to the heart of the good doctor, that if half the wealth of Mr. L—— could have purchased the life of Blanche D'Albi, he would not have hesitated to make the sacrifice.

But neither care nor skill, nor aught that wealth could command, or kindness lavish, could prolong the days already numbered, or reverse the decree that had gone forth.

Towards the close of the fourteenth day of Blanche's illness, the respiration of the unconscious sufferer became quick and laborious, and Dr. M., whose finger was on her pulse, directed that the curtains of her bed should be drawn aside, and a

free current of air admitted through the opened windows. Mr. L—— had entered with the physician, and stationing himself at the bed's foot, stood there with folded arms, and eyes fixed in sad and hopeless contemplation on the affecting object before him. Though the eyes of Blanche were more than half veiled by their full, heavy lids, a streak of soft blue was still discernible through the long dark lashes, from whence, however, emanated no spark of intelligence; and far different from the finely blended rose-hues of healthful beauty, was that bright crimson which burned in either cheek. Her head was raised a little from the pillow, by the supporting arm of the nurse, who, with her hand still at liberty, put aside the deep frill of her cap, and the disordered ringlets which had escaped beneath it, that the sweet fresh air might visit with its comforting coolness those throbbing temples, and that burning brow. It was a beautiful, mild, warm April evening, redolent of life and joy, and Nature's renovation; and the pale, golden light of an April sunset penetrated even through a London atmosphere, and amongst a labyrinth of high walls, and blackened roofs, and clustering chimneys,

into the very chamber of Blanche; and even to that confined chamber, and over those gloomy precincts, came the soft breath of spring, breathing delicious fragrance, as it was wafted through her open window, over a box of mignonette, coaxed into early blossom by the assiduous cherishing of one who had watched over her miniature garden with the impatient interest of eager childhood.

The balmy air stole gently, gradually into the sick-chamber, and between the parted curtains of the bed, as though it were a thing of intelligence, and came gladly on its blessed mission, to convey to the dying Blanche the last soothing sensation she might yet taste on earth—the odorous wafting of her favourite flowers. It came not in vain. As the caressing coolness played over her face, and when it had wandered a few moments amongst the parted ringlets, her quick and laborious breathing became less and less distressing, and at length inhaling one long and deep inspiration, subsided into regular and almost imperceptible respiration, like that of a sleeping infant.

At that moment, there struck up at the farther end of a neighbouring street a strain of wild music,

from a band of itinerant musicians—wandering Savoyards. Wild and touching was the strain, as it came mellowed by distance, and mingled with the evening breeze. It was "Le Rans des Vaches." To every son and daughter of Helvetia, a spirit-stirring spell, a magic melody, never yet listened to unmoved by any wanderer from her mountain land—only the insensible ear of death, or of the dying . . . . but it seemed as if perception yet lingered in that of Blanche. As the notes of that national air swelled out more and more distinctly, a slight tremor passed over her features, and at last, as if awakening from a deep sleep, her soft blue eyes perfectly unclosed, and glancing upwards towards the female form, on whose bosom her head was pillowed, she murmured in her own native tongue, "Maman! bonne Maman!"

As she uttered those few faltering words, her head sunk lower upon the nurse's breast, and half turning her face inward on that kind pillow, like a weary child, the fair eyelids dropt heavily over those soft blue orbs; but long after their lustre was for ever shrouded, and long after the beautiful lips were closed, and the last breath had escaped

them in those few touching words, the smile still lingered there with which those words were spoken, as if impressed by the parting rapture of recognition with the Maternal Spirit, permitted, possibly, to accompany the dark Angel on his awful mission, to overcome his terrors by her looks of heavenly welcome, and receiving from his hands the new Celestial, to be its conductress to those abodes of bliss, towards which, even in their day of mortal probation, the pious Mother had "trained up her child in the way she should go."

CHAPTER X.

BROAD SUMMERFORD.

In the churchyard of Broad Summerford——But why should I affect to describe, as from my own recollection, a place with which I am utterly unacquainted except by report? For, verily, gentle reader, I never set foot in the said churchyard,—neither in the quiet rectory adjoining thereunto,—neither in the pretty village wherein they are situated. And yet each and all of those localities are as familiar to my mind's eye—not only as if I had seen them with the bodily organs, but as if I had long sojourned in the parish where they lie.—And no wonder; for all those places were described to me at that season of life when imagination, like a cloudless mirror, reflects back every object presented before it with the faithfulness of

truth, and the tablets of memory receive those *proof-impressions*, compared with which, the most perfect struck off in later years are faint and spiritless. Besides, the describer was one rich in old tales, and family legends, and all sorts of traditionary lore; one whom I could interrupt and question, with all the confidence of perfect familiarity, and the impetuous curiosity of youthful eagerness; and many a fire-light hour have I sat on the low footstool at her feet, listening to stories of past times, and departed generations, and scenes and places associated therewith, so graphically combined, that the illusion was perfect; and often, in after life, I have caught myself speaking to others of those places, persons, and circumstances, as if I had been contemporaneous with the former, and familiar with the latter, from personal observation and experience. Delightful season! delicious hours! ineffaceable recollections! never to be superseded among the heart's most precious records, by any after enjoyment, however exquisite!

Far other scenes have I mingled in since then—far other interests have excited—far other feelings have engrossed me; but, in weal and in wo—in

cloud and in sunshine—in tumult and in silence—in crowds and in solitude—often, often have I looked back with a sickening heart, a yearning tenderness, a bitter joy, to those quiet hours, when my all of earthly good—my world of felicity—was comprised in such little space—within the walls of that old-fashioned parlour, where the fire-light flashed broad and bright on the warm damask curtains, and I sat on that low footstool by the hearth, at the feet of one who never tired of telling those tales of other days, which I was never weary of listening to. Hers was the true graphic art of story-telling. Her portraits lived and breathed; and, while I hung upon her words with mute attention, the long procession of generations gone, passed before me,—not shadowy phantoms, but substantial forms—defined realities—distinguished, each from each, by every nice modification of characteristic peculiarity—uncles, aunts, and cousins, (a bewigged and brocaded host!) of whom most had been gathered, before my birth, to the sepulchre of their fathers, and the remaining few had lived to bestow a patriarchal blessing on their infant descendant. All these, recalled to earth by

the enchanted wand, were made to re-act their former parts on the great stage for my especial pleasure; and I became as familiar with the names, characters, and persons of those departed worthies, as she who really remembered their times, and had been herself the youthful darling of their latter days.

Among those she best loved to speak of was a kind and gentle pair—an old bachelor, and his twin maiden sister, of the name of Seale, relations of my grandmother, who lived out together their long and blameless lives,

"The world forgetting, by the world forgot,"

in an obscure, quiet village of Somersetshire, called Broad Summerford, of which parish Mr. Seale was the revered and faithful pastor for the space of more than half a century.

"They were the best people in the world," said my dear chronicler; "and some of the happiest days of my early youth were spent at the pleasant rectory of Broad Summerford. Our good relations had heard that my parents were suffering considerable anxiety on my account—my health

having become so delicate as to indicate symptoms of decline—and that change of air and scene had been medically prescribed for me. The kind souls knew that my father and mother could not remove from the small country town, where circumstances had fixed their residence, without very serious inconvenience, and, in the benevolence of their hearts, they forthwith despatched an epistle, requesting that their dear cousins would intrust the precious child to their safe keeping, and to the pure air and rural change of their pastoral habitation, for as long a time as they could spare her from the paternal roof, or till her health should be perfectly re-established, which they almost pledged themselves (with God's blessing) it would be in their salubrious village. Such an invitation, from such inviters, was most gladly and gratefully accepted. My father accompanied me half-way to Broad Summerford, when he consigned me to the care of a grave, respectable-looking person, Mr. Seale's confidential servant, who was sent with his master's equipage, (a dark-green calash, drawn by a steady, powerful old mare, whose sleek coat and broad back might have vied with those perfections of a London dray-

horse,) to receive and escort me to the rectory. John Somers himself was clad in a suit of sober pepper-and-salt, the decent and becoming livery of his reverend master, in whose service he had grown grey, and been advanced, by long tried worth and affection, something beyond the station of a mere domestic. The kind and considerate creature did his best to beguile me of my natural grief at parting with my father for the first time in my short life of fourteen years. He pointed out to me all the most remarkable objects on our road—all the hamlets, noblemen's and gentlemen's seats; and as he had been born and bred in the county, his topographical information was enriched with store of anecdotes respecting the owners of all those goodly mansions. But as we approached Broad Summerford, all his descriptive zeal merged in that favourite spot; and ever and anon it was, "Now, Miss! you're only four miles from the rectory"—and then, "that's Squire R.'s house, miss—a special friend of master's"—and, "now you're only two miles from the rectory—and there's the mill where our wheat is ground—sweet home-made bread you'll taste at Broad Summerford, miss!—and now it's only one

mile—half a one—There's master's upper glebe-land—and there's our folks and horses getting in the hay—Ay, old Joan and I should hardly have been spared just now for anything but to fetch you, miss—but you're come to Broad Summerford in a pleasant time. Now we're a'top of the last hill. —And there! there! look down to your right, miss—Don't you see that great stack of old chimneys all over ivy, and those two grey gables?—That's the rectory, God bless it—and there's the dovecot, and the homecroft, that old Joan has all to herself—a lazy jade—and now we shall be round at the front gate in half a minute." And as John Somers said, a short sweep brought us within that time in front of the rectory, at the fore-court gate of which stood its venerable master, in hospitable readiness to receive and welcome his expected guest. He was indeed a man of most venerable aspect,—of tall and large stature, but something bowed by years, with a pale, placid, almost unwrinkled countenance, though the dim and faded lustre of his mild blue eyes betokened his advanced age, even more than the perfectly white hair, which, encircling his bald crown, descended even

to his shoulders in still redundant waves of silky softness. The old man was standing, with both hands crossed before him on the top of a thick knotted staff, and the attitude happily combining with his orthodox attire, the short cassock and apron became him with a sort of apostolic dignity. As the calash drew up to the gate, Mr. Seale laid aside his staff, and coming forward, welcomed me with a look and voice of almost paternal kindness; and though faithful John was already by the side of the vehicle to help me down, his master chose to perform that first hospitable office, and lifting me out in his feeble arms, (I was a small delicate girl—quite a child in appearance,) said, "Welcome to Broad Summerford, my dear little cousin. May God bless this meeting to us all!" And with that affectionate and pious greeting, he half led, half carried me to the house door, where, on the uppermost of the four broad steps which led to it, stood another aged welcomer, who tenderly reiterated her brother's Christian salutation, and sealed it with a maternal kiss, as she gently drew me to her kind bosom. And so in a moment the little wanderer was at home again—transport-

ed but from one home to another—from the arms of tender parents to those which encircled her almost as fondly.

Mrs. Helen Seale was the very personification of beautiful old age. A fairy creature she was—almost diminutive of stature—but her person in youth had been most delicately and symmetrically moulded; and in her old age it still retained much of its fair proportion, and all its native gracefulness. Her hands and arms were still beautiful! The taper fingers and soft palms were yet tinged with that delicate pink, which still mantled like a maiden blush over a face where Time had set his seal indeed, but, as it should seem, reluctantly, as if the ruthless spoiler had half relented for once in his destructive work. Her eyes were blue like her brother's, (the brother and sister were indeed twins in mind and feature,) but their mild lustre was almost unimpaired; and the soft hair that was combed in glossy smoothness over the roll, under her clear lawn cap, was but silvered here and there among its pale brown waviness. No snow was ever whiter,—no cobweb was ever finer, than that same clear lawn of which Mrs. Helen's cap, ker-

chief, ruffles, and apron, were invariably composed; and the latter was spread out in unrumpled purity over a richly-quilted petticoat of silver-grey silk, and a gown of the same material, abounding in such depth and amplitude of fold as would have furnished out a dozen modern draperies. A narrow black velvet collar encircled her small fair throat, (down which, as is related of fair Rosamond, I used to think one might see the red wine flow,) and the precise neck-kerchief was fastened with a fine diamond pin. The fashion of this raiment was never varied by season or circumstance, except that, regularly on the thirty-first of October, the rich lustring was exchanged for a richer satin of the same colour; a black lace handkerchief was superadded to that of snowy lawn, and a pair of black velvet mittens, turned down with white satin, were drawn over the delicate hands and arms, not to be discarded till the thirty-first of May drew forth the silvery lustring from its retirement of lavender and roses, and consigned the warm satin to a five months' seclusion.

It was marvellous to observe how Mrs. Helen kept herself *in print* as she did! From morning

to night, from week to week, from month to month, from year to year, always the same,—always "*mise à quatres épingles,*" as if she had just stept out of a band-box;—the silk or satin unchanging in hue or freshness—its lawn accompaniments never contracting soil or wrinkle on their snowy smoothness —the neck-kerchief folded in exactly the same number of plaits by the careful hand of that ancient abigail Mrs. Betty, who would probably have been as much *déroutée* by any innovation of those laws of the Medes and Persians, as if her venerable mistress had commanded a ball-dress or a wedding-suit. Yes; one would have thought that the dear old lady had been kept in a band-box, all ready for company, if her whole course of life had not, in fact, been one of most active, though quiet usefulness; for Mrs. Helen was never in a bustle. Neither was she uncomfortably precise about the preservation of this invariable neatness. Nay,—I have seen the old grey parrot on her wrist or her shoulder, and the favourite tortoise-shell cat on her lap often and often; and the old lady took snuff too, and, spite of all, the unruffled purity of attire remained inviolate. The matter was a mystery to

me, whose whole girlish life had hitherto been an outrage to the laws of tidiness.

But I must tell you something more of my first evening at Summerford Rectory. It was already evening, you remember, when I arrived there,—about seven o'clock of a sweet June evening, when the old green calash drove up to the entrance court, and my venerable cousin lifted me down within its quiet precincts. The entrance gate was of filigree iron work, breast high, between two low stone pillars, crowned with balls, but the walls were all evergreen—beautiful holly hedges, as finely kept as ever those at Sayes Court could have been in their day of perfection. This living wall, opening to the right and left in two bowery archways, leading to the offices and garden, formed three sides of the square court, the old mansion itself completing the fourth boundary—a very antique dwelling, with quarter work of red brick, mellowed by time and weather to the richest and most harmonious colouring. The double gable (the same John Somers had pointed out to me from the hill-top) was surmounted on each pinnacle by stone balls similar to those on the entrance pillars. One

was quite wound and matted over with ivy, of which only a few encroaching tendrils had as yet curled round the other ball; but lower down a fine apricot covered a considerable portion of the wall with its skilfully trained branches; and a lovely honeysuckle (then in full bloom) had been allowed to occupy the remaining space, and almost to darken some of the windows with its picturesque festoons. The latticed windows were set deep in heavy stone framework, and the massy door-way opened from a flight of four broad steps, on the uppermost of which, on either side, stood two tubs containing fine orange trees. And there, as I told you, in the door-way between those two fragrant supporters, stood the dear old lady; and after I had received the welcome of her gentle embrace, the brother and sister, taking each a hand, led me between them, through an airy entrance hall, into a small but lofty anti-room, hung round with family portraits, and from thence into a large pleasant parlour, the common sitting room. A very pleasant cheerful room it was, with a fine wide bay window opposite the entrance, and on one side a sashed door, then standing open to a broad gravel walk,

bordered on either side by beds of the choicest and sweetest flowers. The apartment contained no costly furniture, except a fine Indian folding skreen of many leaves, and a valuable Japan cabinet, loaded with rare old china. The curtains were composed of white dimity, as well as the *short petticoats* of the settee and chairs. Those odd little chairs! Methinks I see them now, with their oval backs, sloping down like falling shoulders into little fin-like arms, spread out with such an air of tender invitation! And they held out no false promise. Modern luxury, *recherchée* as it is, has nothing half so comfortable among all its *traps* for loungers. I was soon placed in one of those delightful *fauteuils* by the side of my kind hostess, who established herself before the tea equipage, all ready set out on a small Pembroke table near the beautiful bay window. My travelling guardian, John Somers, (jealous of devolving upon others any of his accustomed services,) soon appeared with the silver-chased tea-kettle and lamp, which he set down on a small mahogany tripod, beside his venerable lady; and it was pleasant to observe the almost reverential gratitude with which the faithful servant

replied to the kind greeting of his aged mistress, and her thanks "for having brought their dear young cousin safe to Summerford Rectory."

The usual tea hour was long past on the evening of my arrival; but for once the clock-work regularity of established custom was infringed, in kind consideration for the expected guest; and Mrs. Helen, anticipating that "the poor child would be half-famished," had taken care that the tea-table should be far more abundantly provided than with the four slices of wafer bread and butter, its customary allotment. In truth, the dear old lady had calculated with great foresight, for I did such ample justice to her plain seed-cake, and made such consumption of her sweet home-made bread and butter, as must have infinitely relieved any apprehension she might have conceived at the first sight of the poor little sickly creature of whom she had so benevolently taken charge. But, in fact, it *must* have been that the air of Broad Summerford wrought miracles. At home, for many preceding weeks, I had almost loathed the sight of food.

Mr. Seale and Mrs. Helen soon drew me into familiar conversation; and, by the time tea was

over, I was prattling away to them with as much unrestraint as if I had been domesticated under their roof for a twelvemonth. But even before the tea equipage was removed, this excitement of animal spirits began to sink under bodily languor and extreme fatigue; my eyelids fell involuntarily, and the sentence I was uttering died away in an inarticulate manner as my head dropt aside against Mrs. Helen's shoulder. Half roused, however, by the gentle contact, I was just sensible that a kind arm encircled me, and a tender kiss was imprinted on my forehead,—that something was said about ringing for Betty, for that "the poor dear child could not sit up to prayers;" and then the bell was pulled, (with what extraordinary acuteness the sound of a bell tingles in one's ears in that state of half slumber!) and Mrs. Betty summoned; and between her and her mistress I was somehow, with little exertion of my own, conducted up stairs into a bedchamber, undressed, and put to bed in a state of the most passive helplessness,—unconsciousness wellnigh, except that I was still exquisitely sensible of the luxury of sinking down on the soft

pillow between the smooth fine sheets, that smelt deliciously of lavender and roses.

I recollect nothing more till the next morning, (my eleven hours' nap had been a dreamless spell,) when I unclosed my eyes to the light of a bright summer sun, which streamed in between the white curtains of my bed, and to the emulative brightness and summer sunshine of Mrs. Betty's comely countenance, who, having looked over and arranged my wardrobe, and prepared everything for my levee, stood waiting in patient silence the natural termination of my unconscionable slumber, from which her gentle mistress, who had already looked in on me from her adjoining dressing-room, had prohibited all attempt to awaken me. "Let the poor dear have her sleep out," said the kind lady; and there stood Mrs. Betty a statue of silent obedience.

At last, however, when it pleased me to awaken, that portly handmaid saluted me with a pleasant good-morrow, and the information, that if I pleased to rise and dress directly, I should still be in time for prayers, and "Master and Mistress's breakfast."

So, between my own alacrity and her assistance, I was soon ready; and then she showed me down to that large, pleasant sitting-room, from which, indeed, I had ascended the preceding evening, but in such a slumberous state, as to leave me no recollection of the way. Breakfast was ready laid, and Mrs. Helen had just preceded me into the room, where sat her venerable brother, at the head of the breakfast-table, with the Bible open before him, in which he was marking out the morning chapters.

Both my kind cousins greeted me with cordial affection; and Mr. Seale, calling me towards him, while his sister rang the summons to their little household, said, "Come, and take your place by me, my dear child. I think, after to-day, I shall appoint you my clerk, for I know your good father has well qualified you for the office."

Proud and happy girl was I to take my station beside that good old man, and on the morrow to assume my allotted office; and though my voice faltered a little at the first responses, my father had made me a correct and articulate reader; and from that day forth I officiated, to the entire satisfaction

of my indulgent hearers, and with a very tolerable proportion of self-approval.

Soon after breakfast, Mrs. Helen took me with her through all the household departments, in every one of which good order and beautiful neatness shone apparent. Five servants composed the indoor establishment. Mr. John and Mrs. Betty having authority over the *corps de cuisine*, under the mild control of the higher powers; for Mrs. Helen, though reposing perfect confidence in her old and faithful servants, took an active share in the family arrangements, and no little pride indeed, in all the more refined and complex culinary arts—such as pickling, preserving, making wines and cordials, sweet waters and strong waters, pastry, and floating islands, and confectionary hedge-hogs. In all the mysteries of distilling the dear old lady was an adept. Rose, peach, almond, and orange flower, pennyroyal and peppermint waters, were ranged rank and file, in long-necked, squat bottles, on the still-room shelves, sufficient in quantity to flavour all the confectionary, and cure all the stomach-aches, in England. I believe, indeed, Mrs. Helen did supply half the county; so great was the repu-

tation of her odoriferous stores, and so liberal her distribution of them. Certain it is, that the annual replenishment of the stock, was considered as much a matter of course by the lady and her assistant handmaid, as the summer reproduction of the grey lustring, and its accompaniments; but why, or on what principle, Mrs. Helen conceived it equally indispensable to concoct a certain yearly quantity of plague-water, I was never fully satisfied; nor, indeed, did it ever come within my knowledge, that there were any applicants for that invaluable elixir, made after the recipe of "our late Queen, Henrietta Maria, of blessed memory," as set forth in crabbed tawny characters, in the old family receipt-book; neither could I ever precisely ascertain, (though I had my own surmises on the subject,) what became of the quantity which periodically disappeared from the shelf, to be replaced by a fresh concoction.

It were endless to enumerate the palsy-waters, balsams, tinctures, elixirs, electuaries, which occupied one department of the still-room, and almost profane to reveal the mysteries of that sacred chamber during the season of concoctions—mysteries as

jealously guarded as those of the Bona Dea from the eyes of the uninitiated and ignorant.

In after-days of complete naturalization in the family, I was privileged with *les grandes et petites entrées*, even of that generally prohibited closet; and great was my delight in accompanying thither my venerable cousin, when her occupation lay within the spicery or confectionary region, and in receiving her instructions in the arts she excelled in—those always excepted which related to the medicinal department; for, to my shame be it spoken, I derived infinitely more gratification from the pastime of sticking over blanc-mange hedge-hogs with almond bristles, than in compounding the most infallible ointment; nor could I, with all deference to Mrs. Helen's superior wisdom, ever go the length of agreeing, that her tincture of rhubarb was to the full as palatable as her fine, old, raisin wine, and her walnuts, preserved with sugar and senna, equally delicious with those guiltless of the latter ingredient.

Among the various concerns transacted in that notable chamber, one of the most important, that

of breaking up the loaves of double-refined sugar, was always superintended by Mrs. Helen; and on those occasions, with a fine, cambric handkerchief pinned on over her clear lawn apron, she assumed even an active share in the operation; and I used to delight in watching the lady-like manner with which the clumsy nippers were managed by her pretty, little, pink fingers, and the quiet dexterity which supplied their deficiency of muscular strength. If Mrs. Helen Seale had chosen, by way of variety, to twirl a mop, or handle a carpet-broom, she must have done it with the air and grace of a perfect gentlewoman.

But you are impatient to know more of my first day at Summerford Rectory. It was full of delightful incident to me, though little or nothing to make a story out of. I have told you, how Mrs. Helen took me her morning round through the still-room, the housekeeper's room, and various offices; and then we visited the dairy.—Such a dairy! such a paradise of milk, and cream, and butter, and curds, and whey, and cream cheeses, and crystal water, and purity, and fragrance!—for many bouquets of the sweetest flowers were dispersed among

the glossy milk pans, and round the shallow reservoir of a marble slab in the centre of the octagon building; on the polished surface of which, butter-pats, of many a fantastic shape, were curiously arranged, half floated by a constant supply of the purest and coldest water, conveyed thither from a neighbouring spring. From the dairy we passed into the poultry-yard; and there I was introduced to a train of milk-white turkeys, and fowls of the same colour, a few bantams, and three galenies, Mrs. Helen's especial favourites, though the perverse creatures could never be brought to submit to any of the regulations of the feathered establishment, straying away over pales, walls, roofs, and barriers of every description, scratching up seed-beds and flower-borders, to the despair of the gardener, and laying their eggs on those, or on the bare gravel-walk, in flagrant dereliction of all fitness and propriety.

Yet those irreclaimables were, as I told you, prime favourites with their order-loving mistress; and I, who partook in some measure of their wild, and wandering, and untameable nature, very shortly became the object of her tender and unbounded indulgence; though the dear lady's nice sense of

decorum, and habitual placidity, were frequently startled into a gesture of amazement, and a hasty exclamation, at sight of her elève swinging on the orchard gate—scrambling, like a cat, along the top of the garden wall—coming in knee-deep in mud, with a lap full of cresses from the water-meadow, or with a frock torn to tatters, in some lawless excursion over hedges and hurdles, when, as dear Mrs. Helen mildly assured me, "the common roadway was so much shorter and pleasanter."

It was some time, indeed, before I astounded the decorous inhabitants of the rectory with these feats of prowess. On my first arrival, I was far too weak and languid for such performances, even if I had not been restrained a while by natural shyness. But that soon yielded to the affectionate encouragement of my kind hosts; and in a month's time, the pure air of Broad Summerford—gentle exercise in the old calash, in which Mr. Seale took me a daily airing—simple but nourishing diet, and asses milk, had so effectually restored my health, that my natural exuberance of animal spirits began to manifest itself, by the indications aforesaid, somewhat to the consternation of Mrs. Helen, though she

could not find in her heart to repress "the fine spirits of the poor dear child, so wonderfully recovered (under God's blessing) by Summerford air, and her good management."

So much for one "night's entertainment," as I have faithfully recorded it, from the well-remembered words of my dear historian. *She* shall resume the narrative in an ensuing chapter, for the benefit of all those who have patience with a subject, which has neither invention, magic, adventure, sentiment, eccentricity, passion, love, murder, or metaphysics to recommend it—only TRUTH.

CHAPTER XI.

BROAD SUMMERFORD.

The history of one day at the Rectory was an epitome of all; and yet there was no monotony, no dulness, no gloom, no heavy flight of time, in that dear mansion. I never knew a tedious hour, during my long sojourn of a full twelvemonth, within its hospitable walls; and yet I had no companions of my own age—nor any indeed, except my two venerable relations, and the four-footed and feathered creatures, with whom I was always sure to contract speedy and familiar intimacy.

In the morning, I generally attended Mrs. Seale in all her home avocations, and, when they were despatched, not unfrequently accompanied her on a round of charitable visits in the adjoining village. Those early hours were usually passed by Mr.

Seale in his study; and notwithstanding my vagabond propensities, I would not have forfeited the privilege of being allowed to read with him one daily hour in that pleasant, quiet room, (made deliciously sombre by the shade of a huge old jessamine which embowered the large bay window,) for all the temptations which lay in wait for me in garden, copse, or meadow. I have ever since delighted in the smell of jessamine and Russia leather, (strange association!) because it immediately brings that dear, old-fashioned room, and its revered occupant, vividly before my mind's eye.

We dined at two oclock; and, after a short nap in his great, high-backed, armed-chair, Mr. Seale generally sallied forth on what he was wont to term his evening rounds through the hamlet, and among the more scattered and remote dwellings of his large parish—in every one of which he was a visiter, not less frequent than welcome and respected. He had a word in season for all: Of comfort—of encouragement—of advice—of consolation—of remonstrance—of rebuke also, when occasion called for it; and never did the good man (whatever pain it cost him) shrink behind motives of false

humanity, from the strict performance of that imperative duty. Nor were the severe truths he uttered less awfully impressive, because it was well known and felt, by every individual of his flock, that their benevolent pastor loved far better to dwell on the promises of the gospel, than on its terrible denunciations.

But Mr. Seale administered not only to the spiritual wants of his parishioners; he also cared tenderly for their temporal necessities; and having considerable knowledge of medicine, and being "intrusted," as he termed it, with a competent income, his means of doing good were manifold, and they were improved to the uttermost. Happy and proud was I, when the good old man, refreshed by his short siesta, entered the drawing-room with his hat on, his staff in hand, (just such a one, methinks, as Bishop Jewel's* trusty steed,) and a small

* "As soon as he (Mr. Hooker) was perfectly recovered from this sickness, he took a journey from Oxford to Exeter, to satisfy and see his good mother, being accompanied by a countryman, and companion of his own college, and both on foot, which was then either more in fashion, or want of money, or their humility, made it so: But on foot they went, and took Salisbury in their way, purposely to see the good Bishop (Jewel), who made Mr. Hooker

basket containing medicines and cordials, which, with a smile of invitation, he invited his "little apprentice," as he called me, to carry for the old Doctor.

Happy and proud was I to obey that cheerful summons; and powerful as were the attractions of meadow rambles, swinging upon gates, and scrambling over hedges and ditches, I was not to be lured abroad by any of those refined pastimes,

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and his companion dine with him at his own table; which Mr. Hooker boasted of with much joy and gratitude when he saw his mother and his friends. And at the Bishop's parting with him, the Bishop gave him good council, and his benediction, but forgot to give him money; which, when the Bishop had considered, he sent a servant in all haste to call Richard back to him; and at Richard's return, the Bishop said to him, 'Richard, I sent for you back, to lend you a horse which hath carried me many a mile, and, I thank God, with much ease;' and presently delivered to him a walking staff, with which he professed he had travelled through many parts of Germany. And he said, 'Richard, I do not give, but lend you my horse: Be sure you be honest, and bring my horse back to me at your return this way to Oxford. And I do now give you ten groats to bear your charges to Exeter; and here is ten groats more, which I charge you to deliver to your mother; and tell her, I send her a bishop's benediction with it, and beg the continuance of her prayers for me: And if you bring my horse back to me, I will give you ten groats more, to carry you on foot to the college. And so God bless you, good Richard.'"

while a chance existed, that, by sitting quietly beside Mrs. Helen's embroidery-frame, I should be called upon to accompany the Rector in his pastoral progress. Dear Mrs. Helen never walked farther than that part of the scattered hamlet immediately adjoining the rectory domain. I cannot fancy *she* could ever have taken a *good long walk*, as it is called. That small fine frame of hers, though perfectly organized, was surely composed of materials too delicate for robust exercise. Those little, little feet, looked as if they had never moved but on Persian carpets, or velvet grass-plats. They would hardly have disgraced a Chinese lady; and among the curiosities contained in the India cabinet, was an embroidered Chinese shoe, that did not match amiss with her little black-velvet slipper. I used to call her the "Fairy Graciosa."

Our tea-time was six o'clock. In summer, the after-hours of daylight were commonly spent in a large, pleasant alcove, terminating the broad garden-walk, to which Mrs. Helen's footstool, her carpet work, or tambour-frame, were duly conveyed by John Somers. Then Mr. Seale busied himself about his flower-borders, and I assisted him in

the agreeable task, so much to his satisfaction, that he was wont to call me his "neat-handed Phillis;" and after some apprenticeship in the initiatory care of sweet-williams, clove pinks, and some such second-rate beauties, I was preferred to the high responsibility of securing the full buds of the rarest carnations, against the danger of premature and irregular bursting, and of tending and even watering the delicate auriculas, more sedulously guarded from every caprice of the elements than ever was Eastern princess, "the light of the Harem." If any weeds of vanity lurked in the good man's heart, they sprung surely from his passion for those favourite flowers; and I have seen him stand for ten minutes at a time, entranced in admiration of a "Lovely Helen," or a "Powdered Beau!"

Those were verily right pleasant hours, when I followed my dear master from flower to flower, with the small green watering-pot, the slender sticks, and nicely shredded strings of fine wet bass. To this day, when busied in my own garden I have occasion to use the latter material, its peculiar smell gives me a strange, indescribable plea-

sure; so strongly and invariably does it bring to my recollection that sweet garden of Broad Summerford Rectory, and my two dear and indulgent companions.

John Somers and twilight came together;—the former to re-convey to the house Mrs. Helen's footstool and working apparatus; the latter gently intimating to the venerable pair, that it was time for aged heads to seek shelter from the falling dews. It was very pleasing to observe the old-fashioned politeness and tender caution, with which Mr. Seale supported on his own feeble arm the more infirm frame of his beloved companion, as they slowly retraced the flower-bordered walk towards their quiet dwelling, holding "sweet converse" by the way, and lingering often—now in mutual admiration of some half-opened, dew-glittering rose—or to watch the antic circles of the bat—or to gaze upon the evening star—or to catch the last mellow notes of the blackbird's vesper hymn, or the deeper tone of the curfew from the neighbouring steeple. And if it was a moonlight evening, candles were not soon called for, on their re-entering the parlour. The old couple dearly

loved to sit together at that beautiful bay window, in meditative and social—yes—*social* silence, contemplating the glorious uprising of the broad full moon, or the silvery brightness of her growing crescent, emerging from behind the dark mass of the old church tower, and "its embowering elms." Solemn and pleasant, doubtless, at such seasons, were the thoughts of those kindred hearts.

Theirs, whose earthly race was so nearly run—whose hopes tended to the same goal—whose innocent lives had flown on in the same peaceful channel—and who trusted not to be divided in their deaths:—surely, though "speech nor language" were at such times interchanged, their hearts communed with each other, and with good spirits, ascending and descending from those starry heavens whereunto their aged eyes were so devoutly uplifted. Young and volatile as I was, I should have felt it little less than sacrilegious to interrupt that sacred silence. I too loved well to sit silent and unobserved in my dark corner, contemplating, with affectionate reverence, that beautiful picture of happy old age.

As the days shortened, we had some reading in

the evening:—History, sacred and profane—Voyages—Travels—Biography—and Sir Charles Grandison.—And Mr. Seale and Mrs. Helen often played a match at backgammon before supper. That was brought in at half-past nine precisely; and soon after ten the Christian household once more re-assembled round their reverend and revered master, to conclude the day as they had commenced it, with thanksgiving, prayer, and adoration.

Such was the history of one day at Broad Summerford. And I have already told you, that one was the epitome of all, with very slight variations—such as the occasional calls of friends or neighbours; for though the aged lady of the Rectory paid no visits herself, many courted and sought her society, ever sure of a kind and cordial welcome. And Mr. Seale now and then brought home a dinner guest unceremoniously invited in his morning ramble; and once or twice in the year, Mrs. Helen collected together a rather numerous evening assembly, formally convened at a fortnight's notice, by regular invitation cards, to obtain which there was as much emulation (though certainly less intriguing) as if the dear old lady

had been a distingnished leader of *haut ton*, and her party the first opening of a fashionable campaign. And in the surrounding neighbourhood of Broad Summerford, there was no lack of the great, the gay, and the fashionable; and yet none but thought themselves honoured by an invitation to the Rectory. Perhaps, too, the mere charm of novelty had its full share of attraction for some of those modish guests, whose habitual listlessness might have found a temporary interest and excitement in the strong contrast opposed by the warm-hearted simplicity within those quiet walls, to the artificial heartlessness which characterized their own circles.

Be that as it may, it rarely happened that any answer but a ready acceptance was returned for one of Mrs. Helen's invitation cards; and the party, once invited and arranged, then sounded great note of preparation. And then was Mrs. Betty in her glory! to say nothing of her less bustling and important, though not less active lady. Then began such compounding of seed-cakes, and pound-cakes, and plain-cakes, and wafers, and crumpets, and all sorts of indescribable accompaniments, as

might have set out half-a-dozen confectioners' shops. And then—for those were the good old times of suppers, and hot suppers—there was such stuffing of turkey poults—such larding of capons—such collaring of eels—such potting of savoury meats—such whipping of syllabubs—such spinning of sugar—such powdering with comfits—such devices, and surprises, and "subtleties," (almond hedge-hogs, and floating islands included,) as Mrs. Glass herself might have been proud to have had a hand in.

During that whole week of preparation, the approach to the Rectory was like that to one of the Spice islands. All round the house, the perfume of lilacs and seringas (if they were in flower) was fairly overpowered by the exotic odours of mace and cinnamon; and I used to conceit—*dans mon petit moi-même*—that the persons of Mrs. Helen, and her faithful Betty, must have been half embalmed, by the time their labours were over in that nest of spicery.

You are not, however, to infer, that the quiet and elegant routine of domestic regulations was at all infringed upon by these extraneous proceedings;

that any thing like vulgar bustle, or *parvenu* anxiety, marked the grand reception-day; or that Mrs. Helen's serene self-possession was in any way affected by the expectation or arrival of her guests. She was too perfectly the gentlewoman to feel any such underbred trepidations; and her true politeness—the courtesy of the heart—gave to her whole deportment such natural gracefulness, as could never have been imparted by the finest artificial polish. Besides, every thing was in good taste, and in perfect keeping, throughout the whole modest establishment. No attempt—no pretension—no display—no cold best rooms, to be thrown open for its one grand day of annual exhibition—no sumptuous carpets to be uncovered—no cold, glazy cushions to be uncased—no costly gilding to be unpapered—no swathed-up curtains to be unswathed—no ornamental trumpery to be arranged with elaborate carelessness—no unusual decoration to be remarked in the large, comfortable, constantly-used drawing-room, except that the green dragon beau-pots were filled with some of Mr. Seale's choicest flowers, never put by the dear old man but on such special occasions—ostensibly as an offering to Mrs. Helen;

but having hinted as his besetting sin—his floral vanity—I may just venture the surmise, that his liberality was not purely disinterested, and that a cynical eye might have detected original sin in the delight which beamed in his mild countenance, when the beautiful bouquets, near which he was sure to post himself, drew forth admiring exclamations from the courteous bystanders, and humble petitions for slips and cuttings at the proper season.

Nothing could exceed the tone of elegant propriety—of perfect respectability—which pervaded the whole establishment. Old John Somers, with his silvery hair, and suit of sober grey, followed by his attendant page in the same livery, moved about with all the conscious dignity of long and faithful servitude, bearing round the circle such tea and coffee, in such china as was not often to be met with, on a noble silver salver, richly chased and emblazoned, like all the family plate, of which there was abundance in common use; and the smooth-headed, rosy-cheeked lad, who trode closely behind with his tray of cates, was remarked, by many a smiling observer, to copy, with very successful mi-

mickry, his great-uncle's gravity of deportment,—for the aged domestic and his youthful assistant stood in that near relation to each other.

No parade of farther attendance was ever made on these company occasions. There was no conscription—no forced levy from the farm-yard and stable. The gardener and cow-boy were not stuffed into spare liveries made to *fit* all sizes, and stuck up like scare-crows in the entrance-hall, or shoved into the drawing-room to poke forward refreshments, with great red hands like lobsters' claws, and bony wrists protruding half a yard beyond the livery cuffs, to slide scalding coffee into ladies' laps, overset the candles, whisk their coat-flaps in the fire, and tread upon the tail of the old tortoise-shell; who, for her part, dear old Matty! occupied her wonted place on the hearth-rug in undisturbed serenity, evincing no emotion at the presence of company, or indeed any notice of the assembled guests, except by unbuttoning her eyes a very little wider, and purring a note or two louder, when either of them stooped down to court Mrs. Helen's favourite, by smoothing her velvet coat.

On one of those gala days, just before the arrival of the expected guests, I was the unlucky means of ruffling the composure of my dear old friend and protectress, more than I had ever seen it affected by any outward circumstance. I have hinted to you that my toilet duties, and the concerns of my wardrobe, were not always attended to with the scrupulous neatness I ought to have observed in those matters. I had been the companion and playmate of boys—of my brothers only—and the association had, naturally enough, moulded my tastes and habits more in conformity with theirs, than was quite consonant with feminine propriety. Hence those uncouth pastimes to which I have confessed myself addicted; and the natural result of such exploits was the dilapidated state of a wardrobe, from which it would have been difficult to select an upper garment in perfect preservation. And as the requisite repairs ostensibly devolved on me, and I abominated needle-work, the general condition of the whole may be more easily conceived than described. On this especial evening I had been tenderly admonished to take timely care that my dress was *whole* and neat, not

distinguished by appalling rents, or disgraceful tuckings up; that it should be put on *properly*, that is, in good time, so as to be drawn equally over both shoulders, not dragged on in such hurry and bustle as to send me forth into the drawing-room all flushed and fluttered, and "frightened out of that fair propriety" which Mrs. Helen so justly deemed indispensable to the carriage of a gentlewoman. Mrs. Betty had, moreover, received private injunctions to superintend my toilet, and send me down "fit to be seen." But, alas! it so happened that about the time that respectable personage sought me, in pursuance of her lady's directions, I had rambled away into the adjoining hazel copse, and was too busily engaged in hooking down the bright brown clusters of ripe nuts, to remember Mrs. Helen's solemn injunctions; and when at last they started into my mind, and I scrambled and scampered back into the house, and up to my own chamber, Mrs. Betty's attention had been attracted to other weighty concerns, and I performed the ceremony of the toilet, uncontrolled by her judicious censorship; and a pretty toilet I made of it!—a brief one, certainly—and I also reached the draw-

ing-room in excellent good time, long before the arrival of company. Lucky was it that I did so—lucky for my own credit, and the restoration of Mrs. Helen's elegant composure, which received an indescribable shock at my first awful appearance, still panting and breathless with my race home, and the bustle of changing my dress—arms, neck, and face crimsoned over, and shining to boot from the effects of a rough and hasty ablution in soap and water, which elegant cosmetic had by no means, however, contributed to efface or disguise sundry marks and scratches, (one happily conspicuous across the bridge of my nose,) inflicted by certain intercepting boughs and branches, with which I had too rashly encountered, in my reckless return through the hazel copse. Then the best frock was dragged on, to be sure—but not over both shoulders. And its clear texture too plainly revealed certain ghastly rents and fractures in the undergarment, the tucks of which being all unripped on one side, lowered it to the very ground in careless festoons. I had considered the tedious operation of changing stockings quite a work of supererogation, and that I did very handsomely, in cramming my

thick cotton ones, mud and all, into a pretty little pair of black satin slippers, the becomingness of which I was by no means insensible to.

Such was the apparition which presented itself to Mrs. Helen's delicate perceptions, as I entered her presence, dragging on, or rather pulling up, a pair of *once* white gloves, the size of jack-boots, through the thumbs and fingers of which, all gaping and curling back like the capsules of overblown flowers, my red thumbs and fingers protruded like ripe capsicums.

Mrs. Helen's first instinctive act was to pull the bell as she had never pulled it but *once* before, when her own cap had taken fire. Now, as then, the whole household came running at the unaccustomed summons, but respectfully drew back, and made way for Mrs. Betty's approach, when once aware that their lady was neither on fire nor in a fit, and only unusually vehement in requiring the attendance of her faithful handmaiden.

"Oh! my good heavens, Betty!" ejaculated the dear old lady in her imperfect English, (she was not a native of this island.) "Look at this child! look what she has done with herself—*Bon Dieu!*

quelle horreur! But quick—quick—we must make something with her before the company come—*La pauvre enfant!*"

And they did try their best to make "something" of me. I was hurried into Mrs. Helen's dressing-room, and there she and the dismayed Betty set to work to rectify the incongruities of my dress at least. The scratched and scarlet face and neck were past mending for one while; and, truth to tell, only glowed and glistened the more fiercely for Mrs. Helen's tender application of rose-water and milk of roses. But the muslin frock was properly arranged over a whole under-garment. The muddy cotton stockings were exchanged for silk ones, an exchange which, once effected, I entirely approved of. A drawer of beautiful perfumed French gloves was pulled open, and a delicate pair, nicely fitted to my unworthy hands, the form and size of which, however, did not absolutely disgrace them; and as to the colour, that was of my own acquiring, and I was solemnly enjoined not to unglove till it had subsided to a more lady-like complexion. The face and neck were not to be concealed or mended; and when we were once

more in the drawing-room, my dear good cousin could not help reviewing me, with looks in which a little vexation was still discernible, as she once or twice softly murmured to herself, "*La pauvre enfant!*"

Even that gentle ejaculation was thought too severe a rebuke by Mr. Seale, who comforted me under the infliction, and pledged himself to Mrs. Helen, that I should be quite fit to be seen in ten minutes, and that I would never again transgress in like manner.

That night, while I was preparing for bed, thinking over my late inattention to Mrs. Helen's injunctions, and her indulgent gentleness, I could not help asking her ancient abigail, who was assisting me to undress, whether, in the whole course of her long service of five-and-forty years, she ever remembered to have seen her lady really out of temper. I could not ask if she had ever seen her in a passion. That was as much out of the scale of possibilities, as it would have been for a lamb to roar like a lion, or a turtle-dove to exchange natures with a hawk. But Mrs. Betty quite astounded me with her prompt reply. "Oh, yes, Miss! my

mistress did *once* put herself into a fearful passion, at least my master said so, though, for my part, I should never have found it out; and except *that once*, I never saw her so much vexed and disturbed as she was with you this evening; and you know, Miss——"

"Oh, Mrs. Betty, I know well enough how much I deserved a hearty scolding, and yet my dear cousin could not summon up so much as a frown to testify her displeasure. She in a passion! Dear Mrs. Betty, tell me all about it, I beseech you."

"Why, Miss, you must know then, if there is one thing my mistress takes more pride in than another, it is that fine, old, rare china on the top of the commode in her dressing-room; but the finest piece of all is gone now—a large green jar that had belonged to her mother; and my mistress prized it dearly for that reason, and was so careful of it, that she never suffered any one—not me even—to dust or touch it, or any thing else on that commode. Cicely is a good, steady, careful girl now, (you know Cicely, Miss,) but she came to us a sad giddy, careless, tearing young thing at first, about

twenty years ago, and my mistress soon saw what a desperate hand she was at whisking and flicking about her duster; so she gave her double charges never so much as to go near any of the china, particularly that on the commode. Well the careless wench must needs meddle with it, for all my mistress's warning; and one unlucky day, sure enough, down she whisked that beautiful green jar, and it was smashed all to pieces. My mistress heard the crash, and up stairs she was in a minute, and there stood Cicely, looking sheepish enough to be sure, and the jar all to particles at her feet. Well, Miss, if you'll believe it, the tears came into my mistress's eyes, and, 'Oh!' says she, 'my dear mother's jar!' And then to be sure she did colour up over her very forehead, and spoke quicker than I have ever heard her, before or since. 'Upon my word,' says she, 'this is too bad, after all my biddings. Go, go, you naughty, careless girl, and don't let me——'

"She was going on, speaking very quick, but my master, who had followed her up into the room, came and took her hand, and motioning Cicely to go down stairs, (she did not wait for second orders,

the careless hussy,) he led my dear mistress to the settee, and then, for all he kissed her kindly, and comforted her for the loss of their mother's favourite jar, he read her such a lecture about the sinfulness of giving way to such violent passions, as soon set her a-crying in good earnest, a dear sweet soul! and me, too, to keep her company; though for my life I could not see any such great wickedness, in the few words she had spoken; and that hussy's carelessness was enough to provoke a saint. But my dear mistress did not for a long time give over reproaching herself, for having, as she said, given way to such unchristian violence of temper, and she went so far as to demean herself to that idle wench, that had done all the mischief, and told her she was very sorry to have spoken so hastily, 'however blamable it was in you, Cicely,' says she, 'to disobey my orders; but I hope it will be a warning to you to be more careful in future; and, above all, to avoid the fault of which I have been so unfortunate as to set you an example.' Lord bless her! we should all be angels upon earth, if we could but follow the example she sets us; and I believe, o' my conscience, Cicely has been a steadier and a

better girl from that very day, for she said, to be sure she minded my dear mistress's mild words more than a hundred scoldings."

I hardly knew whether to laugh or cry at Mrs. Betty's fragment of secret history; but I felt that everything I heard about my dear, excellent relations increased my love and respect for them. Another little discovery, illustrative of Mrs. Helen's character, affected me far more seriously—almost painfully—soon after my arrival at the Rectory. In the bedchamber assigned to me, which, as I told you, communicated with Mrs. Seale's dressing-room, besides the wardrobe and drawers allotted to my use, stood a second chest, containing, as Mrs. Betty notified to me, table and bed linen, and sundry other things, which she would remove if I required additional room. I had much more than sufficient to contain all my possessions, but disorder requires perpetually expanding elbow-room, and it reigned paramount over my wardrobe, till at last, all my own drawers being in a chaotic state of repletion, I resorted to those over which my right extended not, to lay by some article of dress on which I was disposed to bestow more than

common care. I pulled open the first drawer of that same chest, then, and there lay before me, not the smooth, flat-folded damask, or glossy bed-linen, on which I expected to have found room to deposit my own dress, but *one* long, white, glazy garment, all frilled, and trimmed, and pinked, and scalloped about, in a strange uncouth fashion, such as I had never seen before; and yet in a moment—almost at the first glance—I had an instinctive, shuddering consciousness of its destined appropriation—and I was standing motionless before the open drawer, gazing on its contents with eyes half blinded by tears, but from which no tears fell, when Mrs. Betty entered the room, and startled me by her hasty exclamation. "Oh, Miss! what are you looking at?" she cried. "I thought *that* drawer was locked. My mistress desired I would take particular care it was while you slept in the room—but I suppose I took out the key without turning it—and you see what *she* has made ready, and laid there with her own dear hands."

I asked no question at that minute—indeed there was nothing to ask. That visible proof of solemn preparation was all-eloquent, and I conti-

nued gazing upon it with such heart-struck awe, as if the dear and venerable form it was one day to attire, had been already shrouded in its chilly folds. Language has no words to express that exquisitely painful sensation, that agony of intense feeling, which seems to contract and compress the heart, and arrest its pulsation, under the sudden operation of some distressful cause—and then the frightful violence of its restored action !—its seemingly audible throbs !—the abrupt sob that bursts forth—saving it as it were from breaking ;—the hysterical choking !—the inarticulate attempt to speak !—I remember how I struggled with it all on that occasion, which was not (as some might hastily conceive,) an inadequate cause for such painful excitement. It was the first time that Death had been brought home to me ; that his insignia had appalled my sight ; that his reality had impressed upon my heart its ever afterwards indelible signet. And now the certainty of the inevitable doom burst on me, as if it were immediately to fall on those I loved so dearly—and I wondered at my past security, and thought with a cold shudder of the great ages of those beloved friends—of the advanced

years of my own dear parents—and then I longed, with an agony of tender impatience, to draw them all close round me together; or rather, that I could encircle them all in one close embrace, never more to lose sight of them for one single minute, of those poor numbered few, yet remaining, of their stay upon earth.

The anticipation of my own equally irreversible doom had no share in that painful tumult of feeling. It is seldom, I believe, that the awful conviction of our own mortality impresses itself forcibly on the heart, while we are still buoyant with youth and health, and unbroken spirits, and unchastised expectations, and untarnished hopes. The paroxysms of youthful grief resemble the hail-storm, or the thunder-shower, which does not saturate the earth though it defaces its fair surface for a season, beating down the delicate flowers, and the tender herbage. Deeper, far deeper penetrates the small, continued rain—palsying, if ungenially cold, the very heart of vegetation; and so do the cares, and doubts, and disappointments, and troubles of advancing life, sink deep and deeper into the human heart, till its fine springs are broken, its beautiful

illusions destroyed, its enthusiastic warmth extinguished; and then, indeed, comes the *sensible* conviction of our own mortality, and that we are hastening down a perceptibly rapid declivity, to "the house appointed for all living."

How wisely and mercifully is it ordained, that we should acquire thus gradually this solemn conviction!—In early life, while all is well with us, we generally connect too inseparably the images of Death and the Grave; but, as we approach nearer that final earthly home, a further prospect opens more distinctly on the Christian's eye; and though the destroying angel stands in the narrow passage, and we behold him even in all his revealed terrors, his dark pinions cannot intercept from our steady gaze that effulgence of glory which overpowers, with the brightness of its promise, our natural shrinking from the fearful things which intervene—from the array of Dissolution—the Shroud—the Coffin—and the Grave.

Besides, the weary traveller is content to lie down and be at rest. He whose journey is all before him, scarce heeding the sage warnings of experienced pilgrims, fancies that he at least shall be

more fortunate,—that he shall discover wells of water and pleasant places, which they missed in their way over the desert; or, rather, he fancies that "the land is a good land,"—that they have misnamed it a wilderness; and, at all events, that there is much time before him, (though they call it brief,) —that the end is far distant—and he has not learnt to contemplate, much less to covet the repose of the grave. He believes in, but he does not *feel*, his *own* mortality—no, not even when that of his dearest friends is pressed home upon his heart, with that startling force and evidence of truth which so painfully affected me, when I chanced on the discovery of Mrs. Helen's solemn preparations. I could not recover myself that whole day, nor look at my dear cousin without a strange, choking sensation, and my eyes filling with tears; and, at last, when the dear old lady noticed my unusual quietness, and questioned me, with kind anxiousness in her gentle voice, whether I was ailing or fatigued—the pent-up sorrow fairly got the better of me, and I clasped her round the neck, sobbing as if my heart would break, to my own unspeakable relief, and proportionate surprise and alarm on her part. But after

much tender inquiry, and many soothing caresses, my hysterical affection, as Mrs. Helen termed it, was set down to the effects of over-fatigue, and exhausted spirits, and a restorative cordial was prescribed for me, (not the infallible Plague-water,) and a comfortable posset was prepared for my supper, and I was dismissed early to bed, with many a tender kiss and affectionate injunction to sleep well, and not exhaust myself in future with over activity and violent exercise.

On entering my chamber, I looked as fearfully askance towards the chest of drawers, as if I had expected that some ghastly phantom would occupy its place; and, before I began to undress, satisfied myself that Mrs. Betty had been true to her promise of locking fast that terrible repository, and taking away the key, as if, by so securing the object which had caused me such an unexpected shock, I could also exclude from my mind the images that shock had awakened. But the phantom was not laid so easily. That chest of drawers was to me like the mysterious box, immovably fixed in a corner of the merchant Abudah's chamber. I never looked towards it without something of distressful

feeling; and I never became so familiarized with the idea of its contents, as to place on it, as I had been accustomed to do, my work-box, my flower-glass, or any other of my goods and chattels.

There was no assumption of singularity, or of superior strength of mind, in Mrs. Helen's funeral preparations. She would have concealed them, had it been possible, even from her faithful attendant; and when the latter tenderly remonstrated with her on the subject, she observed, with a cheerful and cheering smile, "It will not kill me one minute the sooner, my good Betty; and, when the time comes, all will be ready, without much trouble for anybody."

Besides, the custom of providing burial-clothes was still very prevalent in Mrs. Seale's time, among the many primitive customs of her native land. Of these, all that would bear transplanting, she had imported to Broad Summerford some fifty years before, when she had accompanied her brother thither, on his taking possession of the Rectory. Yes, for full fifty years that brother and sister had "dwelt together in unity," in that same quiet mansion;—"lovely and inseparable in their lives," in-

deed, but in their deaths not to be united. Not in the grave, at least. Who can doubt that they are so, and for eternity, in their Father's kingdom?

But this has been a long gossip; and I reserve for another day my remaining store of reminiscences from this fragment of the family chronicle.

CHAPTER XII.

BROAD SUMMERFORD.

I DO believe, continued the faithful historian, that in the whole course of her life, Mrs. Helen Seale had never conceived (much less indulged) but one *purely* selfish wish. That *one*, however, was so earnest, that inasmuch as was consistent with the most unreserved submission to the will of Providence, she made it her humble and frequent prayer, that it might please God to take her to himself, before her beloved brother was called to rest from his labours. It was a natural—*almost* a blameless wish. The shrinking of a tender and timid spirit, from the prospect of being left to solitary decay under the burden of accumulating infirmities, and the fond, though perhaps *irrational* desire, that the earthly remains of her beloved

companion and her own might mingle together in the same grave.

She was well aware, that if Mr. Seale departed first, the poor remnant of her days must find an asylum far from Summerford; and it was her maxim (adapted to the subject of interment) that "where the tree falls, there it *should* lie." So she earnestly prayed to God to take *her* first, if it was his good pleasure to do so.

And Mr. Seale, with like perfect submission to the Divine will, whatever its decree, made it his prayer also, that his beloved companion might be taken first. Oh! how affecting was that wish—how beautifully disinterested! But he reflected truly, that it mattered little how dark—how cheerless—how companionless (humanly speaking) might be the last mile of a long journey, provided the lights of Home are fixedly in view, and the traveller confidently expects to find there, already safe in harbour, the beloved ones who have outstripped him on the way.

But to leave *one* behind—one dear desolate being, infirm and helpless, to tread alone that last dreary portion of life's pilgrimage! It was a momentary

pang, repressed as soon as felt; but *that* thought entered like iron into the brother's soul, as sometimes, while apparently absorbed in his book, he gazed with moistened eyes, from under his overshadowing hand, on the gentle, fragile creature whom he had cherished and protected for so many years, with a love "passing the love of woman." At such moments, *his* mental ejaculation was—"Take *her* first, oh God! if it seem good unto thee." The brother and sister were not ignorant of their mutual wish. They had no secrets for each other—no reservation of false tenderness—no mistaken averseness to talk together freely and frequently of their approaching earthly separation. But that was only spoken of with serious brevity, with interchanged looks, and clasping hands, expressive of mutual encouragement; and then they discoursed, long—fully—fondly—almost rapturously, of their sure and certain reunion in that Good Land, where there shall be no more tears—no more parting—no more sin—no more sorrow.

But though the prayer of the righteous doth most assuredly ascend up into Heaven, and find favour with his Maker, it followeth not, therefore, that

the All-Wise, who judgeth not as man judgeth, may see fit to *grant* the petition. He often grants in wrath, and denies in mercy—contents the unreasonable, or perverse, or impious wish, and disappoints the blameless and humble desire of the pure and pious heart. To the eye of faith His ways are sufficiently justified, even in *this* world; and at the consummation of all things, we shall understand, as well as acknowledge, their infinite perfection.

It was *not* the good pleasure of their heavenly Father, that the aged pair at Summerford Rectory should depart thence to their better habitation, in the order that might have seemed happiest for them, to human judgment. The gentlest, the weakest, the most infirm, the most helpless, was left behind, to superficial observation, alone and desolate. The beloved brother, the tender companion, the faithful comforter, the life-long friend, was called first to his reward; and when the hour of parting *actually* arrived, both felt—the departing Christian and she who had so little while to tarry after him—that a strong arm was around them in their trial, and that it was indeed a matter of small moment, which first overstepped the threshold of eternity.

There were after moments in store for the bereaved survivor (and she knew it well) of natural weakness—of inexpressible anguish—of conscious desolation ; but the anticipation of those troubled not the almost divine composure which irradiated her meek countenance, as she partook with her expiring brother of those consecrated elements, which she had so often received from his own hands, at the altar of that church wherein he had ministered so long, and so faithfully.

There was not a dry eye among the many hundred persons assembled in and about the churchyard of Broad Summerford, on the day of Mr. Seale's funeral—not a dry eye throughout the whole assemblage, except those of the venerable greyhaired man immediately following the two gentlemen who attended as chief mourners. He walked quite alone—bowed down with the burden of threescore years and ten, and of a sorrow which sought no vent in outward demonstration. His hand had helped to arrange the pall over the coffin of his dead master. His arm (as the corpse was carried through the door-way) had been stretched forward with cautionary gesture—for word he spake not—as if

to guard the insensible burden from rude or sudden contact; and his dim eyes were never for a moment diverted from that last object of his earthly care, till it was laid in its appointed house, and the cords were withdrawn from beneath the coffin, and the earth rattled on its lid, and had covered up for ever from mortal sight, all of the departed saint over which the grave was permitted to assert its victory. Then, as having fulfilled his office even unto the end, John Somers raised his eyes from earth to Heaven, his lips quivering with a few words of inward ejaculation, and turning slowly from the brink of the grave—and yet pausing to look back on it, with an expression that seemed to say, "Why may I not *now* lie down beside my master?"—he shook his head as it declined upon his breast; and so, silently acknowledging the kind but unavailing sympathy of the many who would have pressed about him with well-meant officiousness, he passed on quietly through the hushed assemblage, and laying his hand on the ready shoulder of his young grand-nephew, slowly and feebly retraced his steps towards the Rectory, and up to his own chamber, and taking his bed almost imme-

diately, he arose thence no more—till, at the end of a few weeks—having received the grateful farewell of his aged mistress—for whose service, had it been permitted, he would still have consented to live a little longer—he also was borne along the churchyard path, and interred in the same grave with his revered master.

Such had been Mr. Seale's testamentary request, in case his old servant (who had been long declining,) should end his days at Summerford. He also gave directions respecting the memorial stone, which should mark out the place of their joint sepulchre; and it may be seen to this day under the shade of a broad maple, which stands in the east corner of Summerford churchyard—a plain thick slab of grey marble, on which it is simply recorded, that

UNDERNEATH
LIETH THE BODY
OF
THE REV. JOHN SEALE,
AGED 83 YEARS,
(52 OF WHICH HE HAD BEEN MINISTER TO THAT PARISH);
AND OF HIS FAITHFUL SERVANT,
JOHN SOMERS,
AGED 81 YEARS.

Amidst the incessant fluctuation of human affairs, of those especially characterizing the state of society in our own country, there are few circumstances more generally affecting than the departure of a widow from her husband's house. Even under the most favourable aspect—when she departs in ease and affluence—voluntarily departs—voluntarily, at the suggestion of her own judgment, resigns the home of which she has been so long sole mistress, into the rule of a tender son, and of a daughter-in-law scarcely less dutiful than Ruth—both of whom would fain detain her, to be, with her wisdom and her grey hairs, the crown and glory of their household—even under circumstances so favoured, it cannot be but that the woman most firm of purpose, *must* feel (if she have common sensibility) some natural yearning, some momentary pang, when she looks back on that abode, to which, in the prime of her youth and beauty, she was led a young and happy bride—where her children first saw the light, and grew up like olive branches about their parents' table—and going forth into the world, returned, and returned again to the blessed reunion of the domestic

circle—where she bore mild rule over her household, setting it the pattern of her own pure and virtuous life—where no poor man ever turned unrelieved from her gate, and no neighbour unwelcomed from her hospitable door—and where, above all, she has shared with the partner of her life their common cup of hopes and fears, of joy and sorrow, of fruition and disappointment—where they had grown grey together, encouraging one another in the down-hill way—till at last the fiat of separation came—and, with a woman's devotedness, she had received the departing breath, and closed the expiring eye.——All these, and innumerable other affecting recollections, must crowd together into the widow's heart, when she looks back upon that home which she shall no more re-enter but as a temporary guest. But when her departure is *not* voluntary—when her dwelling devolves to strangers, or to distant kindred, and therefore she must leave it—or to a heartless son, who, to the prayer of "the asking eye," answereth not "abide with us, my Mother," and therefore she must leave it—or when (being attached to church preferment) it passeth into the hands of a new incumbent, and

therefore she must leave it—(ah! how often under circumstances of accumulated distress!)—*then*, indeed, it is painful to think of the departure of a widow from her husband's house.

Never widow sustained a heavier loss by the best husband's death, than did Mrs. Helen Seale by that of the best of brothers. And, by his decease, the living of Broad Summerford falling to a new rector, she had of course to provide another home for the short residue of her earthly sojourn. The choice of that asylum was hardly left to her own free-will, so pressing were the entreaties of her numerous kindred that she would take up her abode among them in her native island. I fear, indeed, that she was sorely beset on the occasion, and that when finally prevailed on to fix her residence beneath the roof of two female cousins, she rather yielded to importunity, and to what she considered a grateful sense of their desire to accommodate her, than to the secret inclinations of her own meek and affectionate heart, whose dictates, had she attended to them only, would probably have induced her to re-establish herself in England, in the vicinity of my parents, her most beloved,

and, I may say, most disinterestedly attached relations. But matters were ordered otherwise. The maiden sisters obtained Mrs. Helen's promise to establish herself with them ; and it was furthermore decreed, that a male relation of both parties, one of Mr. Seale's executors, should escort her to her new place of abode, when the affairs which were likely to detain her in England were finally arranged. In truth, the necessary delay was to her a respite ; for grievous as was the void in all her home enjoyments, irreparable as was the change at the Rectory, it was still full of associations and recollections more precious to her than any social comforts the world had now to offer.

It was soon known at Summerford, that the living was already bestowed, by its young titled Patron, on a college friend of his own standing, just qualified to hold it ; and rumour prepared the parishioners to expect in him a pastoral guide of very different character from that of their late venerable minister. Mr. Seale's curate was, however, continued in his functions *pro tempore*, and for a few weeks nothing decisive was known of the new Rector.

In as far as was compatible with the great change which had taken place in her earthly circumstances —and in spite of her approaching removal, so omnipotent is habit, that Mrs. Helen had again fallen quietly into the routine of her accustomed occupations and household cares; and a superficial observer would have perceived little alteration in her deportment and person, except that the former was somewhat more subdued and serious—that her quiet movements were more slow and feeble—and that she looked more aged, partly from an increased stoop in her gait, and from the exchange of her usual attire for a still closer garb of the deepest mourning. Her soft fair hair, scarcely silvered till her brother's death, but now completely blanched, was no longer smoothed up over the roll beneath her clear lawn cap, but parted and combed straight on either side, under the broad mourning hems of a close mob; and a large black silk handkerchief, crossed over her bosom, almost concealed the under one of thick white muslin. Thus habited, Mrs. Helen was one evening engaged in her storeroom, superintending and assisting in the homely office, of which I have before made mention,—that of

sugar-nipping. One of Mrs. Betty's aprons was pinned before her own, but Mrs. Betty herself had been despatched on some errand to a distant part of the house; and the former comely *embonpoint* of that faithful handmaid having amplified to a vast weight of portliness, she moved with corresponding majesty of gait, and was long absent on her five minutes' mission. It was near midsummer—not a leaf stirred in the glow of a cloudless sunset—not a domestic creature, fowl, beast, or biped, was visible about the Rectory, every door and window of which were flung wide open, so that a stranger might have entered unnoticed, and found his way unimpeded into every chamber of the mansion. Suddenly wheels were heard rapidly approaching the entrance gate. Then the short pull up and knowing check of some dashing Jehu, as he flung the reigns with various charges to an attendant groom—then the clinking of spurs and the creaking of boots across the court—in the entrance hall, (for no regular summons was sounded, and no servant appeared to question the intruder)—in the parlour—along the vestibule—and at last in the very passage conducting to Mrs. Helen's sacred apartment—the

whole progress being accompanied by certain musical variations between a song and a whistle, and the pattering of four-footed creatures, and the admonitions of—"Down, Ponto, down, sir!" "Back, Di, back, you toad!"—apparently unheeded by the canine offenders, for in they rushed, a brace of noble pointers, into the very presence of Mrs. Helen—and immediately their noisy owner stood *in propria persona*, on the very threshold of her sanctuary. There stood the dear old lady, not exactly

> "With locks flung back, and lips apart,
> Fit monument of Grecian art;"

but certainly with "lips apart," and slightly quivering with surprise and trepidation—her mild blue eyes, expressive of strange perplexity, the nippers in one hand, and a lump of sugar in the other; and, as I told you, Mrs. Betty's apron (a checked one as it happened) pinned over her own of snowy muslin. And there stood the intruder, a handsome, good-humoured-looking coxcomb, six feet high, in a pepper-and-salt frock, tight buckskins, and yellow-topped boots; a most unclerical beaver rakishly set on one side,—a silver whistle dangling from

his button-hole, and an eye-glass round his neck, through which he took deliberate cognizance of the apartment and its venerable occupant. The latter soon became aware, that, in the phenomenon before her, she beheld the successor of her late revered brother; and before the shock and amazement incident on that discovery had anyway subsided, the young parson, evidently mistaking her for a housekeeper, or upper servant, proceeded to make very unceremonious observations and inquiries; almost immediately, however, cutting short the string of his own queries, by the still more cavalier address of—"But that will do by-and-by—time enough to ransack the old kennel—and now I'm starving—so despatch, old girl! D'ye hear? and get me something to eat, if you've any prog in the house."

Mrs. Helen was aware of his mistake, and neither mortified nor indignant at the unaccustomed salutation; on the contrary, when she heard this pressing appeal to her hospitality, the natural disgust excited by his unclerical appearance, gave place to her innate kindliness; and anxious to supply his wants—and, if possible, with the particular sort of viand which she imagined him to have spe-

cified, she looked up in his face with grave simplicity, and very seriously inquired—"Pray, sir, what is prog?"

The question set him off in a roar of laughter, and before the fit had half subsided, Mrs. Betty's entrance undeceived him as to the rank of the person he had been so jocularly addressing; and then the young man, who, though very unclerically disposed, was neither unfeeling nor ill-bred, became really confused and distressed at the recollection of his absurd behaviour, and endeavoured to atone for it by the most respectful apologies. They were very placably accepted; and a servant having been summoned to shew the new rector to a sitting-room, or to his chamber—or, if it suited his convenience, to take a brief survey of the mansion to which he came with a master's right, Mrs. Helen gave directions for the preparation of such refreshments as could be served up with the least delay; and her famished guest found them so excellent in their way, that his respect for the hospitable entertainer increased with every mouthful; and it was magnified to absolute veneration by the time his repast was concluded.

A breakfast table, supplied with the finest Mocha coffee, the most perfect "green imperial," the most savoury potted meats, the richest orange marmalade, and the thickest cream he had ever regaled on, put the climax to his ecstatic admiration of the venerable hostess; and if at that moment he did not actually conceive the idea of addressing her with matrimonial proposals,—the possibility of detaining her as superintendent of his future establishment did certainly suggest itself:—"For, what could I do better?" he very rationally soliloquized; "a nice kind, motherly old lady!—gives capital feeds!—never tasted such potted shrimps!—makes tea like an angel!—won't be much in the way—(not half so bad as a wife)—and I must have somebody."

Very rational cogitations!—But the young rector was too politic and well-bred to broach the subject abruptly to his lady-like hostess; and having informed himself of all particulars respecting her—of her high respectability and perfect independence, that knowledge, though it confirmed his desire to detain her at the Rectory, made him aware, that his only chance of success would be to ingratiate himself by respectful attention, and, if possible, to interest her

kind feelings in his behalf, before he ventured on the grand proposal. It was by no means difficult to effect the latter object. Mrs. Helen's benevolence extended itself over every thing that lived and breathed; and her new inmate, besides that he sedulously cultivated her good opinion, really possessed many amiable, and some sterling qualities.

Left, in his earliest infancy, to the sole care of a doting widowed mother, he had been a most affectionate and dutiful son; and tender recollections of his lost parent (whose death was yet recent) made him more feelingly alive to the maternal kindness of his new acquaintance. He was by no means viciously disposed; though the world, and the world's ways, had too much influence over a heart, of which the clerical profession was not the free, disinterested choice; and though it was too probable that in many and material points he would fall far short of the late rector's amiable example, he showed an early and sincere intention to emulate it in beneficence at least, and only required to be directed in the distribution of his bounty by Mrs. Helen's judgment and experience.

He could scarcely have urged a more efficient

plea for the venerable lady's continuance at Broad Summerford; and, moreover, he succeeded in exciting her compassion for his utter inexperience in housekeeping, and the management of a family, and for the loneliness to which he should be condemned if she persevered in her intention of departure; and, by a master-stroke of policy, he so craftily insinuated himself into Mrs. Betty's good graces, as to inlist all her influence in his favour, so that the ancient handmaiden lost no opportunity of observing to her lady, that it would be almost a sin to leave such an innocent, open-hearted, young gentleman, no more fit to keep house than the babe unborn, to be preyed upon and devoured, like a lamb among a flock of wolves, by a pack of idle rogues and hussies. "And then," said she, "though to be sure, he falls far short of what *has been* at the Rectory, and can *never come up to that*, yet who knows, ma'am, what *we* might make of him in the end: and, at any rate, you would not think of leaving him, just as the pickling and preserving-time is coming on, and there is not so much as a pot of black-currant jelly left, (and he told me he was subject to bad sore throats,) and all the tincture of

rhubarb, and the senna walnuts, are out, and Betty Hinks had the last of the palsy-water yesterday; and I am sure you would not choose to leave him only the bare shelves, poor young gentleman, or without a handsome stock of everything good and comfortable. Besides, I've just set Cicely about a set of new shirts for him—(I got the cambric a bargain); and then there's all his household linen to be provided, though, to be sure, if *we* were to stay——"

If Mrs. Betty had studied the art of oratory, she could not more happily have timed the *pause politic*. Her incomplete sentence,—"*If we* were to stay——" left Mrs. Helen to ponder over all the real good she might do, if she *did* stay—and *her secret* enumeration went farther, perhaps, and extended to nobler views, than were particularized in Mrs. Betty's catalogue. "To do good," was the most influential of all motives with one of Mrs. Helen's truly Christian character—and to bless had been the business of her life. Now, though bereaved of him, in whose life hers had been bound up, those affections which had centred in him did not all shrink inward, absorbed in selfish sorrow;

and they had been greatly won upon by the respectful, and almost filial attention of her young acquaintance. There was no congeniality of disposition between herself and the persons who had importuned her to dwell among them, neither had they any near or dear claims upon her; and then, though she had never uttered one idle regret, never indulged one thought that savoured of repining, her heart clung to the earth—the very earth of Broad Summerford—above all, to that narrow portion of it hallowed by the grave of her beloved companion. All these considerations, and possibly something of the natural effect of age on a singularly gentle character, the force of habit, the dread of change, the formidable prospect of a journey and a voyage, of isolation among strangers—all these considerations and circumstances co-operated so well with the young rector's persuasive eloquence, that Mrs. Helen would probably have ended her days at Broad Summerford, had she been left to her own uncontrolled decision.

But she had some thousands at her sole disposal, and the tender solicitude with which her distant

kindred had pressed her to reside among them, was so far from suffering any abatement by "hope deferred," that it kindled into a glow of inexpressible impatience for her removal from Broad Summerford, when they became aware that the unexpected conduct of the new rector had more than half-reconciled her to continue there; so they zealously bestirred themselves in assisting her to arrange the affairs which still required her presence in England. Business that (as they had lately averred) would require months to settle, was now disposed of in as many days. Difficulties were smoothed, objections levelled, obstacles removed, (no such pioneer as interested zeal,) promises insisted on, claims of blood, of affection, of propriety, urged imperatively, almost reproachfully, till the object was effected; and the good old lady, with her ancient Abigail, the staid Cicely, and John Somers's grand-nephew, (now advanced to his uncle's office,) were uprooted from their peaceful home, and transported the weary way by sea and land, to that which had been provided for them under the roof of the maiden sisters, whose capacious and com-

modious dwelling had obtained for them the warmly-contested privilege of receiving, or rather making prize of their "dear cousin."

I wish I could tell you—I wish I could persuade myself, that the remaining years of my dear old friend found a happy and serene asylum in that which she was rather compelled than persuaded to accept. At best, the contrast between that latter home, and the one she had so long inhabited, must have been felt painfully. But I fear, I fear, all was not done that might have been done, to render the change less striking—that when the removal was finally effected—and the "dear cousin" safely deposited within a ring-fence of kindred surveillance, that love grew cold, and zeal relaxed, and respect abated of its observances; and as the meek spirit bowed down with the declining frame, advantage was taken of those affecting circumstances; and she, who, under the fostering care of watchful affection, or even in the quiet independence of her own free home, might still have supported her honoured part in society, and tasted the sweets of social intercourse, sunk into a very cipher, obviously treated as such, in an establishment, of which,

though spoken of as a household partnership, she bore the entire charges. And when, about two years after the removal from Summerford, it pleased God (by a sudden stroke) to deprive her of her faithful friend and servant, whose indignant spirit, and honest zeal, had in some measure stemmed the tide of encroachments on the independence of her more gentle and passive mistress—when it pleased God to take away from her this faithful creature, under various frivolous pretences, it was soon afterwards contrived to remove from about her the two other attached servants, who had followed her fortunes from Summerford.

> "What need of two?" they said, "what need of one?
> To follow in a house, where twice so many
> Have a command to tend you?
>
> * * * * * *
>
> "I prithee, lady! being weak, *seem* so.
> All's not offence that indiscretion finds,
> And dotage terms so."

But the mild nature so heartlessly aggrieved took no offence—complained of no injuries—resisted no indignities. Unhappily, perhaps, she was too silent—too passive; for a word of appeal from

herself would have brought friends, and firm ones, to her rescue. But she was timid by nature, and her mental energies gave way at the first shock of unkindness. Her life was protracted to an unusual extent; but for many years before her death, repeated, though slight paralytic seizures had partially deprived her of the use of speech. *Partially* only; for though unable to express her wants and wishes in explicit language, or to utter a sentence in common conversation, she could recite the Psalms—the whole book of Psalms, with unfailing accuracy, and unfaltering articulation; and those sacred songs became *her language*, adapted and applied to all such subjects as she was inclined to notice, with an aptness and promptitude which bespoke an inspired, rather than a disordered intellect. And hers was not disordered. The fearful spirit sank under oppression and neglect; but the believing soul took refuge with its God—communed continually with him in the sublimest of all strains; and it is not presumptuous to believe, that when the faltering tongue breathed out that pathetic appeal—"Leave me not in the time of mine old age—neither forsake me when my strength faileth

me"—it is not too much to believe that an answer was immediately vouchsafed, and that the inward ears were blessed with the sound of that gracious assurance—"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." To the last (for such sublime colloquy) her utterance, and her intellect, failed not. From the period that those divine songs had become her sole language, she had continually recited them in the accents of her mother tongue, and one who stood beside her deathbed told me, that the moment before her departure, she slowly and audibly articulated—

"Mon ame, retourne, en ton répos, car l'Eternal t'a fait du bien. Je marcherai en la présence de l'Eternal, dans la terre des vivans - - -"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HAUNTED CHURCHYARD.

A FRIEND of mine, with whom I lately compared churchyard "*experiences*," gave me a little narrative of one which had recently fallen to his share, during an angling excursion in one of our northern counties. It will be best and easiest to let the narrator speak in his own person, so, without further preamble, "I tell the tale as it was told to me."

Arriving about dark one evening at a large village, where I proposed taking up my quarters for the night, I observed a general stir and agitation, as if a bee-hive were pouring forth its swarming colonists; and as I proceeded down the long straggling street, towards the sign of the "Jolly Miller," the whole population of the place seemed streaming in the opposite direction of the churchyard, which I

had passed at the entrance of the village. Men, women, and children were hurrying along, with an appearance of eager trepidation; and there was a general hum of voices, though every one seemed to speak below his natural key, except a few blustering youngsters, who were whetting their own courage, by boasting of it with valiant oaths and asseverations, and ridiculing the cowardice of the women and children. The latter were running along close by their mothers, holding fast by their gowns or aprons, and every minute pressing nearer, and looking up in their faces, with eyes of fearful inquiry. As the different groups scudded swiftly by me, I caught here and there a few disjointed words about "a ghost," and "the churchyard," and "all in white," and "Old Andrew," and "ten-foot high," and "very awful!" Half-tempted was I to turn with the stream, and wind up my day's sport with a *ghost hunt*, but the sign of the Jolly Miller waving before me, and the brown loaf, and foaming can, so naturally depicted thereon, were irresistible attractions to a poor piscator, who had fasted since early morning from all but the delights of angling; and who, as day declined, had followed the wind-

ings of the stream for many a weary mile, to seek rest and refreshment at the village hostelrie. It was well for me that I arrived not in equestrian equipage, for neither landlord, hostler, nor male biped of any denomination was visible about the large old house and its adjacent stable-yard. But I needed no attendance; so stooping with my shoulder-load of rod, basket, and landing-net, as I stept down one step into the low, heavy, old porch, I passed straight on into the kitchen, where a blazing fire in the huge gaping chimney gave me a cheerful welcome, though neither there, nor in the adjoining tap-room, could I espy signs or tokens of any living creature.

I could have been well contented to take silent possession of one of the high-backed settles within the ingle-nook, had there been wherewithal within reach to appease "the rage of hunger," whose importunate calls were rather incited than suppressed by the feeling of warmth and comfort which circulated through my whole frame, as I stood beside the companionable hearth. So I called lustily, and thumped the end of my fishing-rod against the heavy oak table and dark wooden partition, till at

last came hurrying forth from an inner chamber, a little old woman, whose sharp shrivelled face betokened no mood of sweet complacency. But a few words, intimating my intentions of sojourning n her house that night, and my voracious designs upon her larder and ale-butt, smoothed, as if by magic, half the wrinkles in her face, and put her in such good-humour, with *me* at least, that she would fain have installed me into the chilling magnificence of the parlour, whose sanded and boarded floor, and dismal fireless grate, nodding with plumes of fennel, like the Enchanted Helmet in the Castle of Otranto, I was obliged to glance at, though the first glimpse sent me back with shivering eagerness to the comforts of the kitchen-hearth, where at last I was permitted to settle myself, while mine hostess spread for me a little claw-table, with a snow-white cloth, and set about preparing my savoury supper of fried eggs and rashers.

It was not till I had despatched two courses of those, with a proportionate quantum of "jolly good ale and old," that I found leisure, while attacking the picturesque ruins of a fine old Cheshire cheese, to question mine ancient hostess respecting those

signs of popular agitation which had excited my curiosity as I came through the village. My inquiry set wide open the floodgates of her eloquence and indignation. "Well I might ask," she said, "but, for her part, she was almost ashamed to tell me what fools the folks made of themselves,—her master among 'em,—who was old enough to know better, Lord help him! than to set off, night after night, galloping after a ghost,—with Bob Ostler at his heels, and that idle hussy Beckey,—leaving her to mind the house, and look to everything, and be robbed and murdered for what they knew, —and all for what quotha? She wished, when *their* time came, they might lie half as quiet in their graves as old Andrew did in his, for all their nonsensical crazy talk about his walking o' nights." I waited patiently till the 'larum had unwound itself, then taking up that part of the desultory invective which more immediately related to the haunted churchyard, and its unquiet tenant, I got the old lady fairly into the mood of story-telling; and from what she then related to me, and from after gleanings among other inhabitants of the vil-

lage, succeeded in stringing together a tolerably connected narrative.

Andrew Cleaves, whose remains had been interred the preceding week in Redburn Churchyard, was the oldest man in its large and populous parish, and had been one of the most prosperous among its numerous class of thriving and industrious husbandmen.

His little property, which had descended from father to son for many generations, consisted of a large and comfortable cottage, situated on the remote verge of the village common, a productive garden, and a few fields, which he cultivated so successfully, rising up early, and late taking rest, that by the time he had attained the middle period of life, he was enabled to rent a score more acres—had got together a pretty stock of cattle—had built a barn—and enclosed a rick-yard—and drove as fine a team as any in the parish—was altogether accounted a man "well to do in the world," and was generally addressed by the style and title of "Farmer Cleaves." Then—and not till then,—and still with most phlegmatic deliberation, he began to

look about him for a partner:—a *help meet*—in the true homely sense of the word, was the wife he desired to take unto himself; and it was all in vain —"Love's Labour Lost"—that many a wealthy farmer's flaunting daughter, and many a gay damsel of the second table, from my lord's and the squire's, and divers other fair ones set their caps at wary Andrew, and spake sweet words to him when *chance* threw them in his path, and looked sweet looks at him, when he sat within eyeshot at church, in his own old oaken pew, hard by the clerk's desk, with his tall, bony, athletic person erect as a poker, and his coal-black hair (glossy as the raven's wing) combed smooth down over his forehead, till it touched the parallel line of two straight jetty eyebrows, almost meeting over the high curved nose, and overhanging a pair of eyes, dark, keen, and lustrous, but, withal, of a severe and saturnine expression, well in keeping with that of the closely compressed lips, and angular jaw. Those lips were not made to utter tender nonsense—nor those eyes for ogling, verily; but the latter were sharp and discerning enough to find out such qualifications as he had laid down to himself, as indis-

pensable in his destined spouse, among which (though Andrew Cleaves was justly accounted a close, penurious man) money was *not* a paramount consideration, as he wisely argued within himself, a prudent wife might save him a *fortune* though she did not bring one. A small matter by way of portion could not come amiss, however; and Andrew naturally weighed in with her other perfections the twenty years' savings of the vicar's housekeeper, whose age did not greatly exceed his own —who was acknowledged to be the best housewife in the parish, and the most skilful dairy-woman, having come from a famous cheese country, whose fashions she had successfully introduced at Redburn Vicarage. Beside which, Mrs. Dinah was a staid, quiet person—not given to gadding, and gossiping, and idle conversation; and, "moreover," quoth Andrew, "I have a respect unto the damsel, and, verily, I might go farther and fare worse."

"Marry in haste, and repent at leisure," was, however, another of Andrew's favourite sayings, so he took another year or two to consider the matter in all its bearings; but as all things earthly come to an end, so at last did Andrew Cleaves's

ponderings; and as his actual wooing was by no means so tedious an affair, and as the discreet Dinah had had ample time for deliberation, while the important question was pending, the favoured suitor was not kept long on the rack of uncertainty, and the third Sunday, which completed the bans, saw Mrs. Dinah "endowed," by Andrew Cleaves, with "all his worldly goods," and installed Lady and Mistress of his hitherto lonely dwelling.

He had no reason to repent his choice. For once Dame Fortune (so often reviled for her strange blunders in match-making—so often accused of "joining the gentle with the rude,") had hooked together two kindred souls; and it seemed indeed as if Andrew had only reunited to himself a sometime divided portion of his own nature, so marvellously did he and his prudent Dinah sympathize in their views, habits, and principles. Thrift—thrift—thrift—and the accumulation of worldly substance, was the end and aim of all their thoughts, dreams, and undertakings; yet were they rigidly just and honest in all their dealings, even *beyond* the strict letter of the law, of which they scorned to take advan-

tage in a doubtful matter; and Andrew Cleaves had been known more than once to come forward to the assistance of distressed neighbours, (on *good security* indeed,) but on more liberal terms than could have been expected from one of his parsimonious habits, or than were offered by persons of more reputed generosity.

Moreover, he was accounted—and he surely accounted himself—a very religious man, and a very pious Christian,—" a serious Christian," he denominated himself; and such a one he was in good truth, if a sad and grave aspect—solemn speech, much abounding in scriptural phrases—slow delivery—erect deportment, and unsocial reserve, constitute fair claims to this distinction. Moreover, he was a regular church-goer—an indefatigable reader of his Bible, (of the Old Testament, and the Epistles in particular,) fasted rigidly on all days appointed by the church—broke the heads of all the little boys who whistled, within his hearing, on Sabbaths and Saints' days—said immoderate long graces before and after meals, and sang hymns by the hour, though he had no more voice than a

cracked pitcher, and not ear enough to distinguish between the tunes of the 100th Psalm, and "Molly put the Kettle on."

Besides all this, he had been a dutiful, if not an affectionate son—was a good, if not a tender husband—a neighbour of whose integrity no one doubted—a most respectable parishioner; and, yet, with all this, Andrew Cleaves's was not *vital religion*, for it partook not of that blessed spirit of love, meekness, and charity, which vaunteth not itself—is not puffed up—thinketh no evil of its neighbour—neither maketh broad its phylacteries, nor prayeth in the corners of market-places, to be seen of men. He was neither extortionate nor a drunkard. He gave tithes of all that he possessed. He *did not* give *half* his goods to feed the poor, but, nevertheless, contrived to make out such a catalogue of claims on the peculiar favour of Heaven, as very comfortably satisfied his own conscience, and left him quite at leisure to "despise others."

It had been the misfortune of Andrew Cleaves, to have imbibed from his parents those narrow views of Christianity; and their early death had left him an unsociable being, unloving, unloved, and

unconnected, till he changed his single for a married state.

> " Habits are stubborn things ;
> And by the time a man is turned of forty,
> His ruling passions grow so haughty,
> There is no clipping of his wings."

Now, Andrew was full forty-three when he entered the pale of matrimony, and the staid Dinah, three good years his senior, had no wish to clip them, being, as we have demonstrated, his very counterpart, his " mutual heart" in all essential points ; so, without a spark of what silly swains and simple maidens call love, and some wedded folks, " tender friendship," our serious couple jogged on together in a perfect matrimonial rail-road of monotonous conformity ; and Andrew Cleaves might have gone down to his grave unconscious that hearts were made for any other purpose than to circulate the blood, if the birth of a son, in the second year of his union, had not opened up in his bosom such a fountain of love and tenderness, as gushed out, like water from the flinty rock, and became thenceforth the master passion, the humanizing feeling of his stern and powerful character. The mother's

fondness—and she was a fond mother—was nothing, compared with that with which the father doted on his babe; and he would rock its cradle, or hush it in his arms, or sing to it by the hour, though the lullaby seldom varied from the 100th Psalm, and, as he danced it to the same exhilarating tune, it was a wonder that the little Josiah clapped his hands, and crowed with antic mirth, instead of comporting himself with the solemnity of a parish clerk in swaddling clothes.

It was strange and pleasant to observe, how the new and holy feeling of parental love penetrated, like a fertilizing dew, the hitherto hard, insensible nature of Andrew Cleaves; how it extended its sweet influence beyond the exciting object (the infant darling) to his fellow creatures in general, disposing his heart to kindliness and pity, and almost to sociability. In the latter virtue, he made so great progress as to invite a few neighbours to the christening feast, charging his dame to treat them handsomely to the best of everything; and he himself, for the first time in his life, "on hospitable thoughts intent," pressed and smiled, and played the courteous host to a miracle.

And sometimes, on his way home of an evening, he would stop and exchange a few words with an acquaintance at his cottage door, attracted by the sight of some chubby boy, with whose stout limbs and infant vigour he would compare, in his mind's eye, the healthful beauty of his own urchin. But great, indeed, was the amazement of Dame Cleaves, when Andrew, who had always "set his face like a flint" against the whole tribe of idle mendicants, making it a rule, not only to chase them from his own door, but to consign them, if possible, to the wholesome coercion of the parish stocks, actually went the length of bestowing a comfortable meal, a night's shelter in an outhouse, and a bed of clean straw, on a soldier's widow, who was travelling, with her babe in her arms, towards the far distant home of its dead father.

Dame Cleaves stared in strange perplexity, and said something about "charity beginning at home," and "coming to want," and "harbouring idle hussies and their brats." But Andrew was peremptory, for his eye had glanced from the poor soldier's fatherless babe to the cherished creature at that time nestling in his own bosom. So the widow

was " warmed and fed," and left a blessing on her benefactor, who, on his part, failed not to accompany his parting " God speed you," and the small piece of money which accompanied it, with an impressive lecture on the sinfulness of want and pauperism, and a comfortable assurance, that they were always deserved manifestations of divine displeasure.

Just as the little Josiah had attained his second year, Andrew Cleaves was called on to resign the wife of his bosom, who went the way of all flesh, after a short but sharp illness. She had so fully realized all the calculations that had decided Andrew to choose her for his mate, that he regretted her loss very sincerely ; but resignation, he justly observed, was the duty of a Christian, and Andrew was wonderfully resigned and composed, even in the early days of his bereavement, throwing out many edifying comments on the folly and sinfulness of immoderate grief, together with sundry apposite remarks, well befitting his own circumstances, and a few proverbial illustrations and observations, such as, " Misfortunes never come alone, for his poor dame was taken at night, and the old gander was found

dead in the morning." Moreover, he failed not to sum up, as sources of rational consolation, "that it had pleased the Lord to spare her till the boy ran alone, and Daisey's calf was weaned, and all the bacon cured; and he himself had become fully competent to supply her place in the manufacturing of cheeses." So Andrew buried his wife and was comforted.

And, from the night of her death, he took his little son to his own bed, and laid him in his mother's place; and long and fervent were the prayers he ejaculated before he went to rest, kneeling beside his sleeping child; and cautious and tender as a mother's kiss, was that he imprinted on its innocent brow before he turned himself to slumber. Early in the morning an elderly widow, who had been used to cook his victuals, and set the cottage to rights before his marriage, came to take up and tend the boy, and get breakfast for him and his father, and she was now detained through the day, in the care of household concerns, and of the motherless little one. She was a good and tender foster-mother, and a careful manager withal, falling readily into Andrew's ways and likings, a woman

of few words, and content with little more than her victuals and drink,—and, inoffensive and taciturn as she was, he had a feeling of snug satisfaction in locking her out every evening when she betook herself to sleep at her own cottage. Then was Andrew wont to turn back to his own solitary hearth, with a feeling of self gratulation, not evincing much taste for social enjoyment, or any disposition again to barter his secure state of single blessedness for a chance in the matrimonial lottery —from which, having drawn a first-rate prize, it would have been presumptuous to expect a second.

What with old Jenny's help, and his own notability, (he had not lived so long a bachelor without having acquired some skill in housewifery,) he got on very comfortably; and for a living object to care for, and to love, the little Josiah was to him wife, child, companion—every thing! So Andrew continued faithful as a widowed turtle to the memory of his deceased Dinah; and the motherless boy throve as lustily as if he had continued to nestle under the maternal wing. He was, in truth, a fine sturdy little fellow, full of life and glee, and "quips and cranks, and *mirthful* smiles," and yet

as like Andrew as "two peas." "The very moral of the father," said old Jenny, "only not so solemn like." He had Andrew's jetty eyebrows, and black lustrous eyes, deep set under the broad projecting brow; but they looked out with roguish mirth from their shadowy cells, and the raven hair, that, like his father's, almost touched his straight eyebrows, clung clustering over them, and round his little fat poll, in a luxuriance of rich, close, glossy curls. His mouth was shaped like his father's, too; but Andrew's could never, even in childhood, have relaxed into such an expression of dimpled mirth, as the joyous laugh burst out—that sound of infectious gladness, which rings to one's heart's core like a peal of merry bells. He *was* a fine little fellow! and, at five years old, the joy and pride of the doting father, not only for his vigorous beauty, but for his quick parts, and wonderful forwardness in learning; for Andrew was a scholar, and had early taken in hand his son's education; so that, at the age above mentioned, he could spell out passages in any printed book, could say the Lord's Prayer and the Belief, and great part of the Ten Commandments, though he stuck fast at the 39 Ar-

ticles, and the Athanasian Creed, which his father had thought it expedient to include among his theological studies. It was the proudest day of Andrew Cleaves's whole life, when, for the first time, he led his little son by the hand along the aisle of his parish church, into his own pew, and lifted up the boy upon the seat beside him, where (so well had he been tutored, and so profound was his childish awe,) he stood stock-still, with his new red prayer-book held open in his two little chubby hands, and his eyes immovably fixed, not on the book, but on his father's face. All eyes were fixed upon the boy, for, verily, a comical little figure did the young Josiah exhibit that Sabbath-day. Andrew Cleaves had a sovereign contempt for petticoats, (though, of course, he had never hinted as much in his late spouse's hearing,) and could ill brook that his son and heir, a future lord of creation, should be ignominiously trammelled even in swaddling clothes. So soon, therefore, as a change was feasible—far sooner than old Jenny allowed it to be so—the boy was emancipated from his effeminate habiliments, and made a man of—a little man complete, in coat, waistcoat, and breeches, made after

the precise fashion of his father's, who had set the tailor to work in his own kitchen, under his own eye, and on a half-worn suit of his own clothes, out of which enough remained in excellent preservation, to furnish a complete equipment for the man in miniature. So little Josiah's Sunday-going suit consisted of a long-tailed coat of dark blue broad cloth, lapelled back with two rows of large gilt basket-work buttons, a red plush waistcoat, (the month being July,) brown corduroy breeches with knee buckles, grey worsted hose, and large new square-toed shoes, with a pair of heavy silver buckles, once belonging to his mother, that, covering his little feet quite across, like a couple of pack-saddles, touched the ground, as he walked, on either side of them. Add to this, a stiff broad-brimmed beaver, (padded within all round, to fit his tiny pate,) under the shadow of which the baby-face was scarce discoverable, and the whole diminutive person moved like a walking mushroom.

Proud was the boy of his first appearance, so equipped, before the assembled congregation; and very proud was Andrew Cleaves, who felt as if now indeed he might assume unto himself, before

the elders of his people, the honour of being father to a man-child.

From that day forth little Josiah, led in his father's hand, came regularly to church every Sabbath-day; but, alas! his after demeanour, during service, by no means realized the promise of that solemn propriety wherewith he comported himself, on his first memorable appearance; and it soon required Andrew's utmost vigilance to rebuke and check his son's restless and mischievous propensities. Great was the father's horror and consternation, on detecting him in the very act of making faces at the Vicar himself, whose unfortunate obliquity of vision had excited the boy's monkey talent of mimicry; and, at last, the young rebel was suddenly and for ever deposed from his lofty station on the seat beside his father, for having taken a sly opportunity of pinning the hind bow of an old lady's bonnet to the back of her pew, whereby her bald pate was cruelly exposed to the eyes of the congregation, as she rose up, with unsuspecting innocence, at the Gloria Patri.

At home, too, Andrew soon discovered that his parental cares were likely to multiply in full pro-

portion to his parental pleasures. Little Josiah was quick at learning, but of so volatile a spirit, that in the midst of one of his father's finest moral declamations, or most elaborate expoundings, he would dart off after a butterfly, or mount astride on the old sheep-dog; and at last, when sharply rebuked for his irreverent antics, look up piteously in his father's face, and yawn so disconsolately, that Andrew's iron jaws were fain to sympathize with the infectious grimace, to their owner's infinite annoyance. At meal times, it was well-nigh impossible to keep his little hands from the platter, while his father pronounced a long and comprehensive grace, with an especial supplication for the virtues of abstinence and forbearance; and so far from continuing to take pride in the manly dignity of his raiment, it became necessary to dock his waistcoat flaps, and the long skirts of his week-day coat, the pockets of the former being invariably crammed with pebbles, munched apples, worms, brown-sugar, snails, cock-chafers, and all manner of abominations; and on the latter, it was not only his laudable custom to squat himself in the mud and mire, but being of an imitative and inventive genius, and

having somewhere read a history of the beavers, he forthwith began to practise their ingenious mode of land carriage, by dragging loads of rubbish behind him on the aforesaid coat-tails, as he slid along in a sitting posture.

Greatly did Andrew Cleaves marvel, that a son of his should evince such unseemly propensities, having perpetually before his eyes an example of sober seriousness and strict propriety. But, nevertheless, he doted on the boy with unabated fondness—toiled for him—schemed for him—waked for him—dreamt of him—lived in him—*idolized* him! —Yes!—Andrew Cleaves, who had been wont to hold forth so powerfully on the sin and folly of idol worship, *he* set up in his heart an earthly image, and unconsciously exalted it above his Maker.

Andrew's cottage was situated on the extreme verge of a large and lonely common, which separated it from the village of Redburn, and it was also at a considerable distance from any other habitation. He had taken upon himself his son's early instruction, and it was consequently easy enough to maintain a point which he had much at heart, that of keeping the boy aloof from all intercourse

with the village children, or indeed with any persons, save himself and old Jenny, except in *his* company. This system, to which he rigidly adhered, had a very unfavourable effect on his own character, repressing in it all those kindlier and more social feelings which had almost struggled into preponderance, when the hard surface was partially thawed, by the new sense of parental tenderness, and while his son was yet a cradled babe, and he had nothing to apprehend for him on the score of evil communications. But now he guarded him, as misers guard their gold,—as he himself, alas! hoarded the Mammon of unrighteousness (his secondary object) but "solely for his darling's sake." So Andrew compromised the matter with his conscience; and so he would have answered to any inquiring Christian.

The boy, though thus debarred from all communication, save with his father and old Jenny, was nevertheless as happy as any child of the same age. He had never known the pleasures of association with youthful playmates—he was full of animal spirits and invention, particularly in the science of mischief—he completely ruled old Jenny

in the absence of his father; and, except at lesson times, and on Sabbaths, had acquired more ascendency over that stern father himself, than Andrew anyway suspected.

The interval between the boy's fourth and seventh year was, perhaps, the happiest in the whole lives of father and son; but that state of things could not continue. Andrew Cleaves had aspiring views for his young Josiah—and it had always been his intention to give him "the best of learning;" in furtherance of which purpose, he had looked about him, almost from the hour of the boy's birth, for some respectable school wherein to place him, when his own stock of information became incompetent to the task of teaching. He had at last pitched upon a grammar school in the county town, about five miles from his own habitation, where the sons of respectable tradesmen and farmers were boarded, and taught upon moderate terms; though, to do Andrew justice, *saving* considerations were not paramount with him, when his son's welfare was concerned, and he was far more anxious to ascertain that his morals, as well as his learning, would be strictly attended to. On

that head, he, *of course*, received the most satisfactory assurances from the master of the "Academy for young gentlemen;" and having likewise ascertained that the boy would have an ample allowance of wholesome food, it is not wonderful that Andrew Cleaves threw the "moderate terms" as the third weight into the scale of determination.

The greater number of the boys—those whose parents were dwellers in the town of C——, were only day-boarders; but some, whose families lived at a greater distance, went home on Saturdays only, to spend the Sabbath-day; and it was Andrew's private solace, to think that the separation from his child would be rendered less painful by that weekly meeting. It had taken him full six months, and sundry journeyings to and fro, to make all his arrangements with the master. But at last they were completed, and nothing remained but the trial—the hard, hard trial—of parting with that creature who constituted his all of earthly happiness. Andrew was a hard man, little susceptible of tender weakness in his own nature, and ever prone to contemn and censure in others the indulgence of any feeling incompatible (in his opinion)

with the dignity of a man, and the duty of a Christian.

His God was not a God of love; and when he rebuked the natural tears of the afflicted—the submissive sorrows of the stricken heart—it was in blind forgetfulness of him who wept over the grave of his friend Lazarus. He had honoured his parents during their lifetime, and buried them with all decent observance; but with no other outward demonstration of wo, than a more sombre shade on his always severe countenance. "The desire of his eyes" was taken from him, and he had shown himself a pattern of pious resignation. And now he was to part with his son for a season, and who could doubt that the temporary sacrifice would be made with stoical firmness? And so it should verily, was Andrew's purpose; upon the strength of which he proceeded, with old Jenny's advice and assistance, to make requisite preparation for the boy's equipment. Nay, he was so far master of himself, as to rebuke the old woman's foolish fondness when she remarked, "how lonesome the cottage would seem when the dear child was gone;" and he expressed himself the more wrathfully,

from the consciousness of a certain unwonted rising in his throat, which half choked him as she went "maundering on."

To the child himself, he had not yet breathed a syllable of his intentions, and yet more than twice or thrice he had taken him on his knee, to tell him of the approaching change. But something always occurred to defer the execution of his purpose—the boy stopt his mouth with kisses—or he prattled so there was no getting in a word edgeways—or it would do as well in the evening, when he came home from his fields. But then, the young one came running to meet him, and had always so much to ask and tell, that the important communication was still delayed. In the morning, before he rose from his pillow, he would tell it as the boy lay still by his side; but while the secret was actually on his lips, his little bedfellow crept into his bosom, and nestled there so lovingly, that his voice died away, as it were, into the very depths of his heart, and the words were yet unspoken. At length he hit upon an opportunity, which was sure to present itself ere long. The next time Josiah was idle and refractory at his lessons—that very moment, in the

strength of indignation, he would tell him he was to leave his father's roof, and be consigned to the rule of strangers. Alas! that fitting occasion was in vain laid wait for—Josiah truly did his best to forward it, but the father could not be angry—and he could not speak.

At last, seriously angry with himself—humiliated at the triumph of human weakness, to which he had hitherto boasted himself superior—Andrew departed one morning to his labours earlier than usual, having deputed to Jenny the task, to which he felt himself unequal. All that morning the father's thoughts were with his child. He pictured to himself the first burst of distress—the first grievous surprise—the inconsolable sorrow at the thought of parting—and he longed to return, and clasp the boy to his heart, and to kiss off the tears from his dear face, and comfort him with soothing words and indulgent promises.

But still as the fond impulse rose within him, he wrestled with it manfully, and lashed on his team, and laid his hand upon the plough, as if to support himself in resolute forbearance. No wonder the furrows Andrew traced that day were the most

uneven he had ever drawn, since the hour he first guided his own plough on his own acres. He kept firm to his post, however, till the usual dinner hour, and even left the field with his labourers, without deviating from his accustomed firm, deliberate step; but when they had turned out of sight to their own homes, then Andrew speeded on rapidly towards his cottage, till just within sight of it he spied the little Josiah running forward to meet him. Then again he slackened his pace, for his heart shrunk from the first burst of the boy's impetuous sorrow.

But those apprehensions were soon exchanged for feelings of a more irritable nature, when he perceived that the merry urchin bounded towards him with more than his usual exuberant glee; and the first words he distinguished were,—"Father, father, I'm going to school!—I'm going to school! —I'm going to town, father!—I'm going to school! When shall I go?—Shall I go to-morrow?—Shall I take my new clothes, father? And my hoop, and my lamb, and old Dobbin?"

A bitter pang it was that shot through Andrew's heart at that moment—a bitter revulsion of feeling was that he experienced. He made no allowance

for the volatile nature of childhood—its restless desire of change and love of novelty, its inconsideration—its blissful recklessness of the future. He read only in the boy's exulting rapture, that this his only, only child—the only creature he had ever loved—who had slept in his bosom, and prattled on his knee, and won from him such fond indulgences as he could scarce excuse to his own conscience—this darling of his age, now on the eve of a first separation, broke out into extravagant joy at the prospect, and testified no anxiety, but to take with him his playthings, and his dumb favourites. The sudden revulsion of feeling came upon Andrew like an ice-bolt, and there he stood motionless, looking sternly and fixedly on the poor child, who was soon awed and silenced by his father's unwonted aspect, and stood trembling before him, fearing he knew not what. At last he softly whispered, sidling closely up, and looking earnestly and fearfully in his father's face,—"Shall I *not* go to school then? Old Jenny said I should."

That second, quiet interrogatory restored to Andrew the use of speech, and the mastery over all his softer feelings. "Yes," he replied, taking the

boy's hand, and grasping it firmly within his own, as he led him homeward—"Yes, Josiah, you *shall* go to school—you have been kept too long at home: —to-morrow is the Sabbath, but on Monday you shall go. On Monday, my child, you shall leave your father."

That last sentence, and a something he perceived, but comprehended not, in his father's voice and manner, painfully affected the boy, and he burst into tears, and, clinging to his father's arm, sobbed out, "But *you* will go with me, father; and you will come and see me every day, will you not? And I shall soon come home again."

That artless burst of natural affection fell like balm on Andrew's irritated feelings, and he caught up his child to his bosom, and blessed and kissed him, and then they "reasoned together:" and the father told his boy how he should fetch him home every Saturday with Dobbin; and how they should still go hand-in-hand to church on the Sabbath; and how his lamb, and the grey colt, should be taken care of in his absence; and his hoop and other toys might be carried with him to school.

Then the child began again his joyous prattle,

with now and then a sob between; and the father kissed his wet glowing cheek, carrying him all the way home in his arms; and thus lovingly they entered the little garden, and the pretty cottage, and sat down side by side, to the neat homely meal old Jenny had provided.

END OF VOL. FIRST.

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